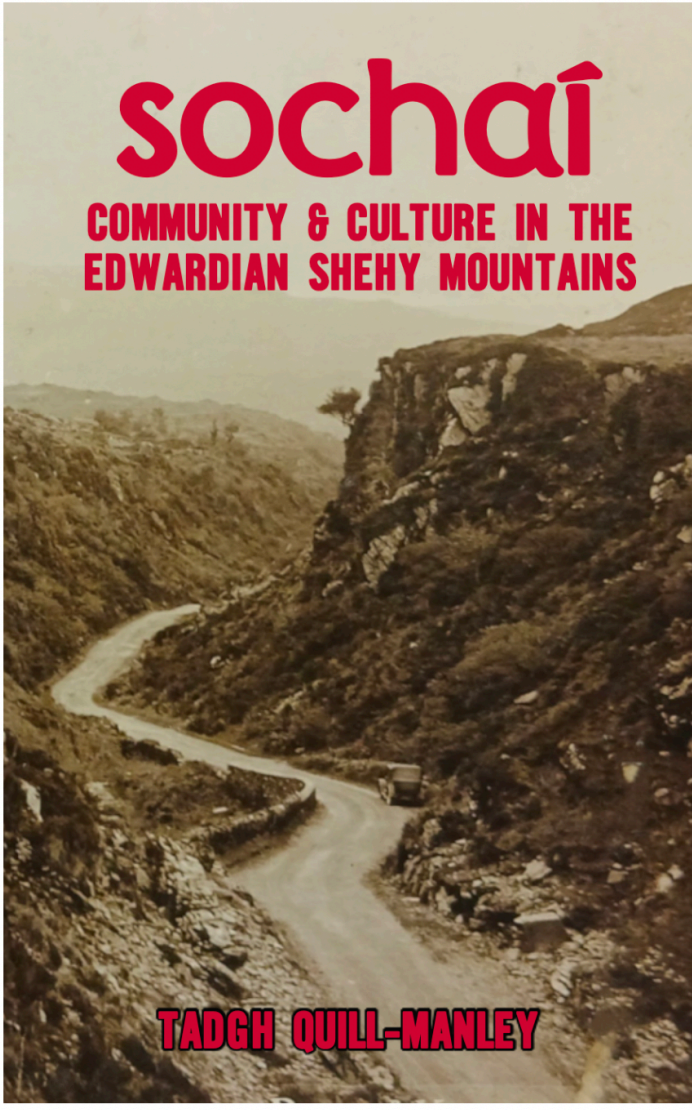
sochaí
COMMUNITY & CULTURE IN THE EDWARDIAN SHEHY MOUNTAINS
TADGH QUILL-MANLEY

SOCHAÍ: COMMUNITY & CULTURE IN THE EDWARDIAN SHEHY MOUNTAINS

TADGH QUILL-MANLEY

Tadgh Ó Cuill-Maonlaí

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(College student - hobby project)

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SOCHAÍ
INTRODUCTION

"Áilleacht na hÉireann, is í an mháthair í do chách."

In '*Sochaí: Community & Culture in the Edwardian Shehy Mountains*,' I attempt to provide a broad, though not necessarily comprehensive, overview of the various activities and institutions - be they administrative, political, religious, sporting and cultural - that shaped a mountain region renowned not only in Ireland, but also Great Britain and faraway USA - for the rustic, poetic charm and beauty of both its landscape and people. Few places can match the purity of the air and the tranquility of its surroundings. Indeed, the Shehy Mountains merited a mention in the 1910 edition of '*Encyclopaedia Britannica*.' My late grandmother, Dr. Ruth Mitchell-Quill, used to remark that, on a good day, Ireland was the best place in the world.

On a misty morning in the early years of the twentieth century, the square at Macroom would stir into life. Farmers brought their cattle and sheep along the roads that wound down from the hills, while women from the surrounding villages carried baskets of eggs, butter, and fowl to trade. In the bustle of a fair day, voices mingled: Irish and English side by side, a laugh here, a bargain there, a burst of song rising from a nearby public house. To the east, the shops displayed their wares in English-script signage, while in the lanes and boreens that branched out from the town, Irish was still the language of hearth and field. It was an ordinary day in Edwardian Ireland, yet one that contained all the ingredients of a society on the threshold of immense change.

The Shehy district was a landscape of contrasts: uplands and valleys, bog and meadow, scattered

cottages and small, yet busy market towns. Macroom, situated to the eastern edge, was a commercial and administrative hub, its council chambers filled with debates about rates, sanitation, and housing schemes for the wider area. To the west and north-west, other smaller settlements and parishes like Inchigeelagh, Ballyvourney, and Ballingeary formed the cultural heartland of Gaelic Muskerry, while the parish of Kilgarvan, slightly over the Kerry border, carried its own reputation for fairs, music, and hardy political activity. Threading through them all were the mountains, rivers, and lakes that defined both livelihood and imagination. The Lee, the Sullane, and the associated Shehy streams carried water to fields and mills; the mountain passes carried drovers, postmen, and young adults sadly heading abroad in search of a livelihood. This was a small region by the map's measure, yet in its daily life it held the richness of a nation itself.

The rhythm of life here was divided between the town and the countryside, but neither could exist without the other. In the little towns of Macroom, Bantry and Kenmare, along with the smaller village centres in between (such as Kilgarvan and Ballyvourney), the presence of shops, schools, banks, and churches gave structure to social life. The weekly market was a point of exchange not just for goods, but also for news, culture, and political argument. Newspapers arrived on the train or by post, carrying reports from Cork City, Dublin, and beyond, but the real talk was about local matters: the success of a hurling match, a landlord's willingness to sell, or the rumour of new cottages being built under the latest Labourers' Acts. Though the market town of Killarney is located to the west of the range, they can be seen from the urban district, with Killarney and its locale being close-knit - serving as a

major cultural, civic and commercial gathering hub for those on the western side of the region.

In the countryside, households lived by the rhythm of the seasons. The land was often poor, but people coaxed potatoes, oats, and turnips from small plots, while butter remained the region's greatest export. Emigration hung over nearly every family: letters from America or Britain arrived with the post, containing remittances that kept many farms afloat. Yet despite this, the countryside was alive with sociability. Neighbours joined together for meitheal - cooperative working parties for turf-cutting or harvest. Storytelling filled the long winter evenings, and ceilidhs brought dance and music into kitchens, barns, and crossroad gatherings.

Sport was a passion that crossed parish boundaries. Hurling and football matches often drew crowds to improvised pitches, often fields lent by sympathetic farmers. The GAA had been founded in the 1880s, and by the Edwardian years its presence was firmly established in the Shehy area. Matches between neighbouring parishes were as much about pride and identity as about athletic skill. The names of clubs, often tied to heroes of past rebellion, usually spoke to the intertwining of politics and play. Athletics meetings, tug-of-war contests, and weight-throwing were also common, echoing older rural traditions of strength and endurance. On fair days, travelling entertainers, musicians, and card players offered diversions. Some of these amusements were frowned upon by the clergy, but they formed an indelible part of the social landscape. Sport, whether sanctioned or spontaneous, offered moments of release and community in lives otherwise tied to land and labour.

Religion shaped daily life in ways that were at once visible and deeply felt. The parish church was the centre of communal gathering, not only on Sundays but for missions, confraternities, and processions. In Ballyvourney, the pattern day of Saint Gobnait drew pilgrims from miles around to visit her holy well and seek her protection. Gougane Barra, with its lake and island chapel, was both a place of devotion and a symbol of cultural identity.

The clergy wielded significant authority, advising parishioners on moral matters and often involving themselves in questions of schooling, politics, and social order. Yet the relationship was not one of domination alone. Priests were respected figures who often came from the same class and background as their parishioners. Their sermons carried weight, but so too did the quiet rituals of family prayers, rosary recitations, and seasonal devotions. Religion provided a sense of continuity and moral framework, but also colour and drama: the flicker of candles, the tolling of bells, the solemnity of funerals, and the celebration of weddings.

Politically, the Edwardian Shehy region was a place of intense activity. The United Irish League had strong branches in the area, and its meetings were reported in local newspapers with as much attention as sports fixtures. Land reform remained the central issue: tenants pressed for the purchase of their holdings, while labourers demanded cottages and plots. The debates in Macroom's council chambers about rates, roads, and housing were not dry matters of administration but questions that touched every hearth. The Labourers (Ireland) Acts gave rural workers new opportunities for improved housing, and RDC meetings often became battlegrounds over who would benefit and how funds would be spent. Nationalist MPs visited to address

rallies, weaving local concerns into the broader campaign for Home Rule. At the same time, the Gaelic League was promoting the Irish language through classes, plays, and gatherings, ensuring that culture and politics were mutually reinforcing. Everywhere from public houses to large open assemblies were important arenas of debate, as were fairs and crossroads, where local grievances were aired and alliances made. For many, politics was not a distant affair but a lived experience, stitched into the fabric of everyday life.

In a sparsely populated region, the natural environment was more than a backdrop; it was central to identity. The Shehy Mountains shaped the economy through their rough pastures and bogs, yet they also inspired folklore and song. Legends of saints, heroes, and spectral figures clung to valleys and passes. It also inspired poetry. We are reminded by Brian Brennan about the the Pass of Keimaneigh, being the site of clashes between the agrarian 'Rockites' movement and the British Army's Muskerry Blue Light Dragoons (most notably in 1822), which cuts through the Shehy Mountains between Bealick and Foilastookeen. It is placed in the heart of rich sheep-farming land, close to Gougane Barra, along the road linking Macroom and Bantry. It was during this period that the renowned Maire Bhui Ní Laoire composed her famous poem, '*Cáth Céim an Fhia,*' about the area.

Place-names carried echoes of older worlds, each hill and stream associated with a tale or a memory. A deep sense of rootedness to nature and place was documented locally. For example, an interesting and exhaustive 1906 piece from the '*Kerry People*' describes the parish of Kilgarvan and its various tiny town-lands on the County Cork border:

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"Kilgarvan parish is in Glanarought barony. At Callan, in 1261, 'MacCarthy' defeated the Geraldines. Copper mines have been worked at Clontoo. The Protestant church was built in 1815. There are ruins of the ancient church in the village. Ardtully Castle was dismantled by the Cromwellian army. There are some geological freaks in the parish: the Bird mountain, with a carved eagle, Colabrack rock, which opens when an O'Sullivan Keal dies, and the Fairy rock, with impressions of human feet. Kilgarvan parish is composed of the following town-lands -

- *Ardtully*
- *Ballagh*
- *Barnastooka, the gap of the stack.*
- *Baurearagh*
- *Bausheen, the rainbow.*
- *Caher, the stone fort.*
- *Cappanlivane*
- *Churchground*
- *Coolknohil*
- *Coolanagoppoge, the nook of the dock leaves.*
- *Coologues, the nooks.*
- *Coomclogherane, the hollow of the little stone church.*
- *Creggeen*
- *Cummeenduvasig*
- *Cummeen, lower and upper, the little valley*
- *Curraglass, North and South, the green marsh.*
- *Derrincullig*
- *Dromacoosh*
- *Dromnycolman, Colman's daughter's ridge.*
- *Fussa, the causeway.*
- *Gortacreenteen*
- *Gortloughane, the tillage field of the little lough*
- *Gortlahard, the sloping field,*

- *Gortloughera, the rushy field.*
- *Gortmarrahafineen, the field of Fineen's murder.*
- *Gortnaboul, the tillage field of the holes*
- *Gortnaskeagh, the tillage field of the thorn bushes,*
- *Grousemount*
- *Gullaba*
- *Gurteen, the little tillage field.*
- *Inchee*
- *Inchimore, the big island or river holm*
- *Inchinanagh, the river holm of the marsh*
- *Inchincoosh*
- *Kilbunow, the church at the mouth of the river.*
- *Kilfadda, the long church*
- *Kilgarriv*
- *Kilgarvan town. There is a well here called Thuber Garivann or St. Garvan.*
- *Kilpadder, St. Peter's Church.*
- *Knockanruddig*
- *Knockanuha*
- *Knockeens, the little hills*
- *Letter cannon, speckled hillside*
- *Lomanagh, the bare morass*
- *Lounaghan*
- *Mangerton*
- *Meelick*
- *Redtrench, North and South.*
- *Rosseightragh*
- *Rusheen, the little wood."*

The Irish language preserved this sense of continuity, providing a vocabulary of intimacy between people and land. Culture flourished in both formal and informal ways. Songs were composed and passed along, often playful or satirical, while stories told around the fire preserved genealogies and local lore. Amateur dramatics and feiseanna had brought poetry and performance to community halls. Education was advancing: national schools dotted the parishes, and

children learned to read and write, though often in English rather than their ancestral tongue. The clash between tradition and modernity was palpable, yet it gave rise to a rich and distinctive culture.

For example, a '*Cork Examiner*' report from August 1910 highlighted that a major Gaelic cultural event took place in Macroom under the auspices of the Macroom Choir Committee, drawing a strong attendance not only from the town and district but also from Cork City. The programme was designed with several notable features to make the occasion one of particular distinction. Chief among these was the engagement of Cork's popular orchestra, a society of musicians already known for their excellence. Their appearance marked their debut performance in Macroom town. The orchestra, numbering more than twenty players, was complemented by the stirring presence of the Brian Boru Warpipe Band, giving the gathering the atmosphere of a grand musical festival. Alongside orchestral and pipe music, the day included solo and choral singing as well as figure and step-dancing, ensuring variety and entertainment for audiences of all ages. The combination of music, song, and dance provided an afternoon of exceptional enjoyment for all who attended.

Currently a college student, I have always felt a strong pull towards a project on this subject, for my ties to the region run deep. On my mother's side, the rare Irish variant of the Quill surname is rooted entirely in this district (it had once been said to be that the region was referred to in an affectionate way by some as "Quill Country"), while on my paternal grandmother's side, my own branch of the name Scully traces back to Bantry and its hinterland. These family threads give the place a sense of intimacy and belonging that rests deep in my soul. As a boy, that connection was made

tangible through visiting and meeting cousins, and the rhythm of the various local agricultural shows - in Macroom, Ballyvourney-Coolea, Bantry, and Kilgarvan - where I was a regular participant. The sights, sounds, and small triumphs of those days are woven into my earliest memories, leaving me with a lasting affection for a landscape and a community that I can call home.

The tranquility and beauty of the district is referred to in Bob Montgomery's '*Great Drives: 22 Great Irish Roads*' (Dreoilín, 2011). In a chapter titled 'Kilgarvan to Coomboola Bridge (The Shehy Mountains),' he acknowledges that:

> *"In my travels around Ireland seeking out roads for this series, I have long felt that the Shehy Mountains and their surroundings in West Cork and partly in Kerry offered several interesting possibilities… This is one of the lesser known drives in this most tourist orientated part of the country."*

The Edwardian decade, from 1901 to 1910, having succeeded a turbulent period beforehand, has often been treated as a quiet interlude before the turbulence of revolution and prolonged violent unrest in Ireland - an intermission between acts of Ireland unsettled. Yet, in the Shehy Mountain district, it was anything but quiet. It was a time of negotiation between old ways and new aspirations. It was an age of fairs and festivals, of labourers fighting for cottages, of priests leading devotions, of young men playing hurling on rough fields, of emigrants boarding ships with letters tucked into their pockets. It was a world both deeply rooted and in motion.

This book, which includes uniquely colorised old photos, sets out to capture that world, and to bring into

focus the texture of everyday life in a region often overlooked, yet rich in meaning. By looking closely at the Shehy Mountain district and West Muskerry during the Edwardian era, we gain insight into the broader transformations of Irish society that occurred in the early 20th century.

SOCHAÍ

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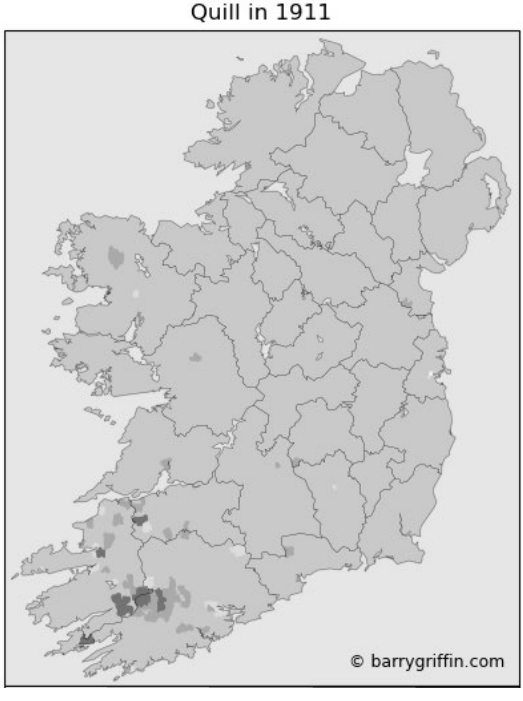
The Pass of Keimaneigh, at Gougane Barra. (Source: Irish Catholic Capuchin Archives - attributed to Mason of Dublin, c. 1920)



A map showing the parish distribution of the little Quill clan from the 1911 Census. Of the 411 present (in an age of much larger house-holds), roughly half of them are based in a single region - the Shehys, stretching between Macroom, to the outer limits of Kenmare and Bantry, and the parishes in-between.

(Source: Barry Griffin)

A view of Gougane Barra in the late 1800s.
(Source: National Library of Ireland)

SOCHAÍ

CREATING THE MACROOM URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Under the 1898 Local Government (Ireland) Act, all existing urban sanitary authorities were reconstituted as Urban District Councils (UDCs). Macroom, then a Towns Improvement Act (1854) Commissioners' district with over 1,500 inhabitants, successfully petitioned for separation from the Macroom Rural District. As per the 'Thirtieth Annual Report of the Local Government Board for Ireland,' the 1901 Order of the Local Government Board "constituted… the urban district of Macroom", creating the Macroom UDC. This Order (cited as the Town of Macroom Urban District Order, 1901) was sealed on 22 May 1901, and took effect on 1 October 1901.

As reported in a weekly issue of the '*Skibbereen Eagle*,' the first meeting of the newly constituted UDC occurred on Monday, 7 October 1901 at midday. Chairman T.J. Twomey presided, with councillors including J. O'Shea, S. W. Baldwin, R. C. Williams, P. O'Brien, and J. J. Cronin in attendance. The Council began with a modest credit balance in the bank (£30 16s. 1d.) and received a memorandum from the Local Government Board (LGB) outlining their rules and duties. One of the first priorities was to confer with the County Council on the division of property, liabilities and responsibilities between the different bodies. The meeting dealt with administrative business, including the resignation of Dr. Donoghue, which was accepted with regret. They also discussed the appointment of a Town Surveyor, agreeing to advertise and consult with other councils on the proper qualifications. They confirmed that quarterly meetings would be required, fixing 4 December 1901 as the first. A letter was read concerning the lease of Macroom's tolls and markets

from Lady Ardilaun's estate, with a request to include flexibility over fair dates. Another letter reported the purchase of the local electric lighting syndicate by Mr. Smith of Park House, Astley, Greater Manchester.

In its first decade, the new council undertook typical urban improvements. Notable projects included a new Town Hall. According to the 'Dictionary of Irish Architects,' plans for a replacement town hall on the old market-house site were prepared in 1898. The parish priest at the time, Rev. Canon Murphy, was requested to contact Lady Olivia Ardilaun (married name Guinness, *née* Hedges-White) to request her sanction for the construction of the town hall on her property, which was the location of the Old Market House in the town square. The undertaking was overseen by a prominent engineer named Mr. Albert William Barnard (who resided at various times in Ballyverane House and Coolyhane House - both in the Macroom area), and who subsequently provided Lady Ardilaun with the plans. It was authorised in 1902 on the condition that all local labourers be employed in its construction. The Buckley Bros. firm, Ovens (west of Cork City), was ultimately awarded the contract for £1,320. Funded in part by a £1,000 loan, the UDC oversaw completion of this civic building.

At a weekly meeting of Urban Council in May 1907, it debated a request from the local Town Tenants' Association concerning the Ardilaun estate, on which most of the town stood. As the agricultural portion of the estate had already been sold to tenants, the Association urged that townspeople should also be enabled to purchase their holdings under the 1903 Land Act. Urban Councillor John O'Shea proposed that the Council call a public meeting to pursue this aim, and the Council agreed that such a meeting should be arranged. The discussion highlighted widespread

frustration with urban rents and landlord control. Urban Councillor Jeremiah Cronin described the hardships faced by householders, whose high rents crippled trade and restricted employment, arguing that reform of town tenure was nearly as important as Home Rule. He cited the city of Belfast, where long leases had encouraged building and industry, as a model. The councillors agreed that empowering town tenants to secure ownership of their homes was essential to improving Macroom's prosperity, and also preventing further emigration and poverty.

Despite such efforts, the 1908 public health report lamented that working-class residents in County Cork towns, such as Macroom, were still "very badly housed," with overcrowded, damp cottages lacking privies or basic drainage.

Macroom UDC also served as the town's sanitary authority, and public-health issues frequently arose. In 1908, the medical inspector noted that whooping cough had been "prevalent" in Macroom Urban District during the year (along with Killarney), and that infected children were "not allowed to attend school". The same report criticised Macroom's sanitation, noting its sewerage was defective, yet praised it as one of the towns possessing a good water supply (by gravity), compared with other failing towns.

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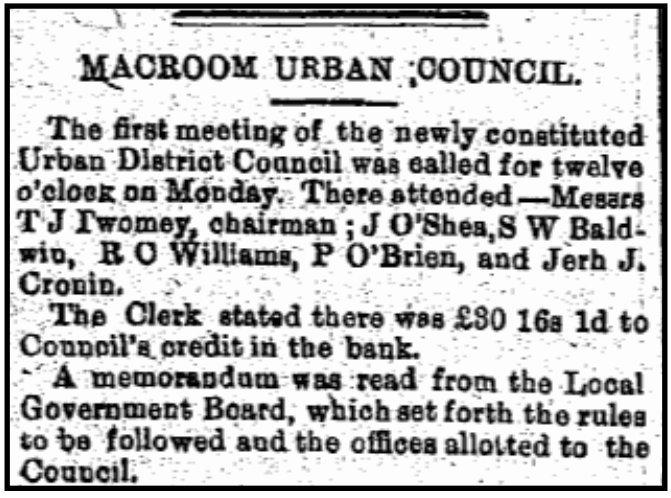

MACROOM URBAN COUNCIL.

The first meeting of the newly constituted Urban District Council was called for twelve o'clock on Monday. There attended—Messrs T J Twomey, chairman; J O'Shea, S W Baldwin, R C Williams, P O'Brien, and Jerh J. Cronin.

The Clerk stated there was £30 16s 1d to Council's credit in the bank.

A memorandum was read from the Local Government Board, which set forth the rules to be followed and the offices allotted to the Council.

(Southern Star 12/10/1901)

A depiction of Lady Ardilaun (Guinness).
(Public domain photo)

DEVELOPING KILLARNEY URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a special meeting of the newly constituted Killarney Urban District Council had in February 1899, presided over by Town Clerk Mr. M. Healy, the chief item of business was the election of a chairman. Present were Commissioners M. O'Sullivan, M.C. Fitzgerald, J. Hilliard, D. Guerin, Thomas Daly, P. Spillane, T. T. O'Connor, J. Kelly, P. Huggard, D. J. O'Connor, Dr. Browne, and J. Finnigan. Mr. W. J. Finnigan was initially proposed but declined, citing lack of experience with public boards. Nominations then focused on Mr. O'Sullivan and Mr. Hilliard. Voting ended in a tie, with six votes each. After discussion, it was agreed to draw lots, and Mr. O'Sullivan was declared elected chairman. Taking the chair to applause, Mr. O'Sullivan thanked his colleagues and pledged to conduct business fairly and in the interests of both the town and its ratepayers. He emphasised his support for improving local housing and buildings to enhance Killarney's development and promised to work for the benefit of working people. Mr. T. T. O'Connor then reminded members that a further meeting would be held later that day to elect a delegate to the new Kerry County Council. In 1902, the UDC passed a special resolution complaining about "the utter inadequacy of the borrowing powers of the urban district," an insightful window into constraints on early capital projects. In 1906, during the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland summer meeting in Killarney, a "hood" was presented to the Society "by the Killarney Urban Council," showing the Council's participation in heritage-tourism events.

In the first decade, the council was led by notable local figures. For example, James T. O'Connor served as

chairman of Killarney UDC in the early 1900s. By virtue of that role he was ex-officio a Justice of the Peace (JP) for County Kerry. O'Connor's tenure became a public issue in 1912, when a Member of Parliament questioned whether he had been properly disqualified from the council. In fact, it appears that O'Connor had been "disqualified from acting as an urban councillor" in 1904 for acting as surety on a council contract; this disqualification (seven years' duration) did not bar him from later being appointed a magistrate, which occurred on 7 June 1907. Another key officer was the council surveyor/engineer George A. E. Hickson. Hickson was appointed surveyor to Killarney UDC in 1904. He produced reports and plans (for example, on the town's water supply) and oversaw local improvements. His firm would later design many of the council's labourers' houses.

The Killarney UDC was active in housing and infrastructure. Notably, in late 1907, the council secured a loan of £3,500 for constructing "Working-Class Lodging Houses". These were workers' tenements or hostel-type dwellings to improve local housing stock. Under Hickson's oversight, the council also laid out new artisans' cottages. In 1908, plans are recorded for a block of houses at Moyeightragh (Killarney) with associated roads, footpaths and sewerage for the UDC. Further schemes for small cottages (artisans' dwellings) appear in 1912–14, indicating an ongoing programme of public housing under the council.

Beyond housing, the UDC worked on roads, lighting, water and sanitation. For example, Killarney UDC applied for and received central grants for roadworks under the 1903 Roads Act. In 1907, the council's roads grant was £1,377 17s 4d (net £1,314 19s 6d after deductions). This funded street paving and other works.

Hickson's 1904 report on the town's water supply (cited in periodicals of the time) shows that improving Killarney's waterworks was on the agenda. The 1908 artisans' houses at Moyeightragh included a sewerage scheme, reflecting the council's role in sanitation. Though such detailed reports are sparse online, contemporaneous Local Government Board records note the council's health oversight: for instance a 1907 outbreak of enteric fever in the district and typhus cases in the fever hospital involved Killarney Urban District, highlighting public health concerns.

A particularly intriguing figure from this period was Mr. Eugene O'Sullivan, elected chairman of Killarney UDC in 1910. By virtue of that office, he became a Justice of the Peace, as specified under the Local Government (Ireland) Act 1898. That same year, however, his appointment sparked controversy in the House of Lords when the Earl of Mayo argued that someone who had been recently unseated from Parliament (O'Sullivan had lost his MP seat) was unfit to serve as a magistrate.

Contemporary commentary also records the UDC passing a resolution of sympathy with the Boer cause during the South African War.

An important meeting of the Killarney Urban District Council was held in November 1910, Mr. T. T. O'Connor presiding. There was a good attendance of members, including Messrs. J. J. Collins and T. O'Leary. The Clerk presented the accounts for the quarter, showing balances in hand but also a considerable sum in outstanding arrears. The Chairman urged that every effort should be made to secure payment before the close of the year. A lengthy discussion took place on the question of collection, some members advocating stricter measures. The

question of recoupment for sub-sanitary officers' salaries was raised. Mr. Collins objected to deductions being made from men's wages when absent through no fault of their own, while other members insisted such action was within the Council's rights. No final settlement was reached. A resolution was passed urging that the benefits of University scholarships should not be confined to children of national schools, but should be extended to all deserving pupils in the district. Copies of this resolution are to be forwarded to the proper authorities. The tender of Mr. Eugene Leahy for certain street works was accepted. Reports were also received of insanitary conditions in Ballalley Lane, Barry's Lane, and Fleming's Lane. Dr. MacSweeney recommended cleansing, lime-washing, and better regulation of the yards, and the Council agreed to carry out these improvements without delay. The Inspector of Nuisances called attention to the keeping of pigs in unsuitable premises. It was agreed to seek the advice of the Board of Health, with the view of preventing abuses of this kind in future. A long discussion arose on the charges made by the Great Southern and Western Railway Company for the carriage of building materials. The members held that the rates were excessive and unfair to the town. It was decided to press the matter further and to seek a reduction. Complaints were heard regarding the lack of proper brushes for council employees. The Council ordered that in future no large work should be undertaken without detailed plans being first submitted.

The meeting, which was of a very practical character, concluded with agreement to carry out the necessary sanitary works, to enforce the collection of outstanding rates, and to forward the resolution on education. Throughout the proceedings the need for financial caution and strict supervision of public works was strongly emphasised.

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The Killarney Town Hall at the turn of the 1900s.
(Source: National Library of Ireland)

Ross Castle, Killarney
(Source: Monovisions)

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THE EDWARDIAN KILLARNEY BOARD OF GUARDIANS

The Killarney Poor Law Union was overseen by a Board of Guardians (27 elected guardians plus 9 ex-officio members, meeting weekly) responsible for the local workhouse and poor reliefworkhouses.org.uk. The union workhouse (opened 1845) had capacity for ~500 inmates and included an infirmary and "idiots". By the Edwardian era the Board managed a sizeable staff; for example, the 1908 Local Government Board report lists at least six district medical officers for Killarney (two on £100/year, one on £120, one on £125, two on £150). The guardians and workhouse officials handled routine maintenance and staffing, though no major new buildings were reported in 1901–1910. (Local memory recalls large western wing extensions to the original workhouse, but documentary evidence is scarce.) Out-of-work or destitute poor could be admitted for indoor relief in the workhouse; the Board also supervised some outdoor relief and clothing clubs, though detailed records of outdoor allowances in this decade are limited.

At the same time of the creation of the Killarney UDC, a meeting of the Killarney Board of Guardians was chaired by Mrs. Teresa Leonard, with a strong attendance including M. Leonard, J.P.; The MacCauliffe, J. W. Leahy, J.P.; E. S. Herbert, J.P.; R. Meredith, J.P.; D. McCarthy, J.P.; R. Williams; E. J. Donoghue; James Coffey; Thomas Walsh; J. C. McCoy; and A. T. J. Moynihan. The Clerk, P. Carey, reported on outstanding rates amounting to £1,510, though these were already being collected steadily. Correspondence from the Local Government Board was read, signed by officials and by the Lord Lieutenant, Earl Cadogan, requiring the Guardians to

respond to specific queries about the appointment of Mrs. Johanna Leahy as a nurse. The relieving officer's report was found satisfactory. Accounts included £7 17s from Mr. Downing for works on the medical doctor's residence at Farranfore, which were to be reviewed by Mr. Moriarty. Veterinary Inspector Mr. Howson reported an outbreak of sheep scab on the farm of Thomas Talbot of Ballyem, and was instructed to monitor local fairs for further cases and to prosecute offenders where necessary. An evicted tenant, David Walsh, applied for outdoor relief, but was refused for lack of a medical certificate. The relieving officer was, however, authorised to provide temporary relief if required. The business was described as generally light, and the Board adjourned early.

The Guardians were deeply involved in local public health and medical relief. The Killarney Union maintained a fever hospital/infirmary for epidemic diseases. The 1908 Annual Report of the Local Government Board (Ireland) notes that the Killarney Rural District treated 121 cases of typhus fever in its fever hospital during 1900–1907 (29 cases in 1900, 27 in 1902, etc). That report also warned that many cases likely went unreported. Preventive sanitation was a recurring concern: a 1907 medical report blamed a typhus outbreak on chronic overcrowding and filth in Killarney's rural houses, noting repeated orders to abate nuisancesarchive.org. Guardians paid for medical care of the poor, including police officers. In 1903 Killarney's Board (with others) formally protested that statute-fixed allowances for police infirmary care were too low (about 10s. per week short of cost), but the government replied that statutory rates could not be changed.

Local voluntary public health initiatives also interacted with the Board's work. For example, a Queen's Jubilee

nursing association in Killarney (run by local aristocrats and clergy) provided a trained nurse to visit poor families. The Countess of Kenmare (Union President) and Lady Castlerosse (Viscountess Castlerosse) presided over its council. In 1905 the Guardians debated whether to appoint a paid midwife for the Killorglin dispensary district, where the Jubilee Nurse already cared for the poor. Father M. Lawlor and others argued that appointing a second midwife would "deprive them of the services of an angel of mercy", so the Board ultimately approved keeping the Jubilee Nurse (at no ratepayer cost) rather than hire a new. This episode shows the Guardians balancing costs against local health needs.

The Guardians continued to support both indoor (workhouse) and some outdoor relief. The workhouse infirmary cared for sick paupers, while able-bodied poor could receive outdoor assistance in lieu of institutionalisation. Newspapers of the day hint at ongoing relief activities: for example, a 1904 Kerry newspaper reports Guardians sending poor patients to sanatoria and supplying disinfectant to the boys' school, while discussing Old Age Pensions and the National Insurance Act. The guardians also managed routine services like clothing contracts and burial expenses. Exact numbers of indoor admissions or outdoor grants are not reported here, but the workhouse remained central to local relief throughout this period.

Local authorities of the era undertook limited housing improvements. In 1907 Killarney Urban District Council (closely allied with the Guardians) secured a £3,500 government loan under the Public Health Acts specifically for "Working Class Lodging Houses" in Killarney. This loan financed construction of labourers' cottages or similar dwellings for poorer town residents. (No similar housing scheme is recorded specifically

under the Guardians themselves, but this UDC project indicates the kind of housing provision in the union.) It appears the Rural District Council did not build any large cottage schemes during 1901–10, though smaller loans for wells and pumps were taken out (e.g. £495 in 1907 for improving Killorglin's water supplies).

The Board raised and spent funds carefully. Poor rates (local taxes) were levied on land and house-owners throughout the union. By 1908 nearly all rates were collected: the Local Government Board noted that county councils had closed most collections by year-end, leaving unpaid poor rate arrears of only about 1%. The Guardians also borrowed for capital works: besides the Killarney housing loan, the LGB reports show other loans in the union (e.g. £320 in 1907 for waterworks). The Board's own accounts (audited by the LGB) reflected normal administration costs. Guardians scrutinised all expenditures – for instance, a Hansard debate notes Killarney Guardians' objection to statutory limits on police hospital as a financial grievance.

The Board was headed by leading local figures. Ex-officio guardians included the Protestant land-owning aristocracy, notably Lord Kenmare (the McGillycuddy) – who chaired or influenced many meetings. (For example, in 1897 Lord Kenmare personally brought a bog-slide safety issue before the Board, blaming the central government for failing to drain the bog). Elected guardians were often local gentry, merchants or farmers, though their names seldom appear in surviving records. The Board's Clerk was Mr Patrick Carey, who handled correspondence and was cited in union letters. Among supporting officials, multiple district medical officers served the workhouse. Outside the Board, prominent community leaders backed its work. For example, the Countess of Kenmare (Union President) and Viscountess Castlerosse were both prominent in

health charities, and local doctors (Dr L. T. Griffin, Dr H. Brosnan, etc.) and priests (Rev. P. Hayes, Archdeacon Wynne) sat on medical and nursing boards affiliated to the Guardians.

Several public controversies touched the Board in this era. Most notably, in 1903 the Guardians (with others) protested to Parliament that statutory rates paid by injured policemen for hospital treatment were too low; the Chief Secretary replied that any change would require legislation. In 1904–05 a fierce local debate arose over maternity services in Killorglin: the Guardians considered appointing a paid midwife, but were swayed by public appeals (including clergy letters) to keep the existing Jubilee Nurse. Ultimately the Board did not hire a second midwife, avoiding a new expenditure.

Another flashpoint was hospital provision: in 1900 a Kerry newspaper letter criticised proposals to close Killarney's fever hospital, calling its loss "nothing short of a calamity" for the poor. Though that letter was to the County Council rather than the Guardians, it highlights local pressure on the Board to protect health services.

No major reforms of the Guardians themselves occurred until the 1913 abolition of Boards (after our subject period). In this decade the Killarney Board largely continued traditional poor-law duties, while navigating occasional disputes over funding levels and public health priorities.

The Board of Guardians was responsible for levying and collecting poor rates to fund the local union workhouse and other relief efforts. By 1908, the Local Government Board reported that nearly all rates were collected, with arrears of only about 1%. The Guardians

managed the union's finances, ensuring that funds were allocated appropriately for various services, including the workhouse, medical care, and public health initiatives.

The Killarney Board of Guardians and Rural District Council held their annual meeting in June 1910 to elect chairmen and review finances. Outgoing chairman Florence O'Sullivan, J.P., was nominated for re-election and praised for his fairness and dedication. Some members argued for James O'Shea, who said he had no personal ambition for the role, but believed the chairmanship should rotate to strengthen the council's governance. In the vote, Florence O'Sullivan won comfortably, with 3 abstentions, marking his twelfth consecutive term as chairman. In his address of acceptance, O'Sullivan promised to remain impartial, thanked members for their sincere respect (even his opponents), and singled out the Clerk, Mr. Carey, for ensuring the union's sound financial standing. He noted that, thanks to prudent management, Killarney Union had one of the lowest rates in the county and funds in credit.

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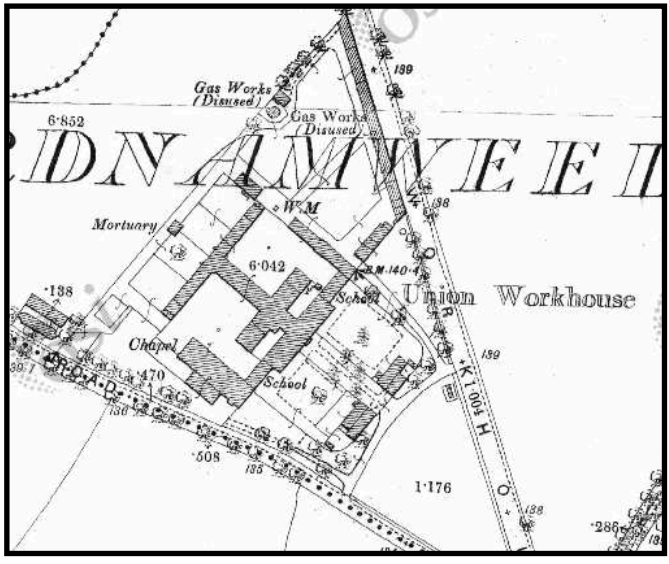

Killarney Union Workhouse
(Source: 'IrelandXO')

The MacGillicuddy Reeks, near Killarney
(Source: Monovisions)

The Great Southern Hotel at Killarney
(Source: Monovisions)

SOCHAÍ
THE MACROOM BOARD OF GUARDIANS

The Macroom Board of Guardians (the elected/ex-officio body managing the Poor Law Union) oversaw the Macroom workhouse and relief services in mid-west Cork. It met regularly (typically alternate Saturdays) and was composed of about 30–33 members (roughly half elected, half ex-officio magistrates). The Board appointed its own committees, received reports from officers (master, matron, medical officers, dispensary committees, etc.), and passed resolutions on all internal and relief matters. The union was funded by a poor-rate on property; until 1899 the Guardians' own collectors raised the rate locally, after which Cork County Council collected rates and provided annual estimates. The Board's general duties included maintaining the workhouse buildings, setting staff salaries, approving budgets, and reporting to the Local Government Board as required.

The workhouse housed the destitute and sick. In this period it held on the order of 100–130 inmates at a time. For example, minutes from Sep 1906 record 125 inmates under care. The workhouse included a proper infirmary and a separate fever. (By 1846–47 a 40-bed fever hospital had been added on the site.) The Board oversaw all in-house provisions: it hired the master, nursing and medical staff (the Master and Matron were senior officers), set the daily regime, and approved any building works or large purchases.

Beyond the workhouse, the Guardians managed outdoor relief via a network of medical and relief districts. By 1906 some 300–400 people were receiving outdoor relief in a typical half-year (e.g. 398 persons on outdoor relief on 22 September 1906. The union was

divided into several dispensary districts (e.g. Macroom, Ballingeary, etc.) each with a medical officer and relieving officer. The Board ran these dispensaries and charity services, issued relief "tickets" to the poor, and even arranged boarding-out of pauper children. For instance, the minutes show relief granted to a widowed mother of five in a labourers' cottage in October 1906. Vaccination was a routine concern: e.g. minutes of November 1906 list the number of outstanding smallpox-vaccination defaulters by district. Such public-health duties were part of the Board's mandate under statutes like the Vaccination Acts.

The workhouse contained an infirmary and fever ward, and its staff provided basic medical care to inmates. By regulation the Guardians also ensured medical aid for the poor outside: they ran the union's dispensaries (essentially clinics) and contracted local doctors. In practice, any pauper was entitled to free treatment when an inmate or via a relieving-officer's order. (For example, Dr R. Barrett was the long-serving workhouse medical officer until 1902.) The Board also supervised midwives and antenatal care in the union; complaints from the public or press were occasionally discussed (though specific cases in 1901–1910 are scant in the minutes).

The Board presented annual estimates of income (from the poor rate) and expenditure (maintenance, wages, hospital costs). All accounts were audited by the Local Government Board. Up to 1899 the Board's appointed rate-collectors levied the poor rate on property. After the 1898 Local Government Act, Cork County Council took over rate collection, paying the Board's demand from county funds. The 1898 reforms also moved many public health and road functions to the new Cork County Council and Macroom Rural District Council.

The minutes show constant attention to costs: e.g. the LGB auditor in December 1906 commented that "the average weekly cost…was very high", and the Guardians debated staff wages and supply prices (they twice voted to raise the Master's salary, from £80 to £90, noting his extra farm work.

The Guardians helped implement labourers' cottage schemes under the Labourers (Ireland) Acts. In practice, the schemes were often handled jointly by the Guardians and the Rural District Council (RDC). Parliamentary records show persistent difficulties: e.g. in February 1902 an MP queried why, in the Board's second cottage scheme, a cottage on land of a farmer by the name of Mr. Hinchion (Clonmayle ED) had twice failed to be erected (once a contractor had defaulted). The Chief Secretary replied that the Board had asked the District Council for an explanation. Similarly, in January 1902 William Sheehan asked why three cottages, approved in April 1901, could not be built once Macroom town became an Urban District on 1 October 1901. The answer was that, since the township was now an Urban District (outside the Rural District's jurisdiction), the Rural District's provisional order could not include those cottages. An earlier case in 1887 had also involved Macroom requesting arbitration on a labourers' cottage site. Even in 1904 there was an official query when a Macroom RDC councillor (Michael Lucey) was reportedly excluded from a Local Government Board inquiry into another cottage scheme. In summary, the Guardians actively promoted labourers' housing but often struggled with administrative delays and jurisdictional snags.

The Board worked closely with neighbouring councils. Several guardians also sat on the new Macroom Rural District Council (established 1899), and the union clerk doubled as RDC clerk. After 1898, public-health

functions (e.g. sanitation, minor roads) went to the Rural District. The Board also liaised with Cork County Council: for example, Cork County's County Home scheme (for chronic sick) after 1920 involved Macroom (and is mentioned in later minutes). The newly-created Macroom Urban District Council (UDC) from Oct 1901 took over local sanitary and road duties in the town. This change even affected poor relief: it meant labourers' cottages in the town ceased to qualify under the Rural District's scheme. One record notes a letter from Macroom UDC about water rates for the workhouse premises after 1921, but UDC actions in 1901–10 were limited to urban services. In general, cooperation was routine: the Board submitted its demands to county funds, and often the same individuals served on both Guardians and RDC, smoothing coordination.

One major controversy was a long-running quarrel with the Medical Officer, Dr R. Barrett. In 1899, the Guardians had suspended him, prompting an LGB inquiry. In June 1903, an MP asked why the LGB was forcing Barrett's resignation without cause. The answer was that Barrett had supposedly been "a source of constant trouble" to the Guardians for years. A sworn inquiry had vindicated the Guardians in 1899, and though Barrett initially agreed to work harmoniously, problems persisted. Finally in April 1902 the LGB told him to resign or be dismissed. Barrett duly resigned and was given a pension. Aside from Barrett, the minutes show few personal scandals; they do record local grievances. For example, in Oct 1906 the Guardians (jointly with the RDC) passed a resolution condemning "the harsh eviction" of Jerry Mahony of Ballingeary by his landlord, and implored neighbouring farmers to obstruct the landlord's hunts. (the same meeting noted relief granted to Mahony's widow and five children in

their small cottage). Such incidents show the Board occasionally took up local social issues.

The '*Skibbereen Eagle*' reported in October 1900, that the Macroom Board of Guardians had adjourned a meeting as a mark of respect following the passing of Mr. J. Quill.

SOCHAÍ

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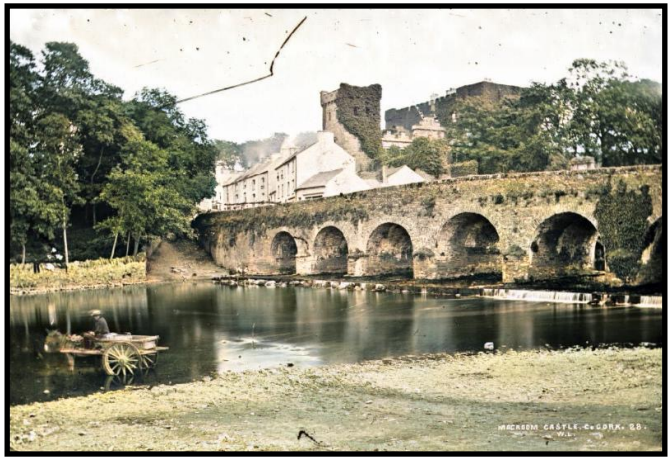

A view of Macroom Castle, with the River Sullane passing underneath, at the turn of the 20th century.

(Source: National Library of Ireland)

MACROOM RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

Under the 1898 Local Government (Ireland) Act, the Macroom Rural District Council (RDC) was established (effective 1899) and charged with typical rural local duties: housing (labourers' cottages), sanitation, road upkeep and public works. In practice this meant setting local rates, approving works under loan from central funds, and overseeing minor infrastructure in the countryside. Macroom RDC's responsibilities mirrored those of other Cork RDCs, and included providing labourers' dwellings as one of its main functions. In general, many public health powers (water supply, drainage, vaccination etc.) were transferred to County and RDC authorities after 1898. In Macroom's case the Cork County Council took over rate collection and broad health oversight, while Macroom RDC (sharing officials and members with the Macroom Board of Guardians) managed local projects.

Provision of rural labourers' housing was a major RDC remit. From 1901 onward several cottage schemes were planned or debated. For example, in January 1902 MP D.D. Sheehan noted that Macroom RDC's November 1899 cottage scheme had been drawn up when the town was still in the rural district. However, Macroom town had been made an Urban District on 1 Oct 1901, and rural districts were legally exempt from the Labourers Acts. As a result, three of the approved cottages in the town had to be dropped. Subsequently, in March 1904 the LGB held an inquiry into an "additional half-acre" scheme for existing cottages. Councillor Michael Lucey (representing Candroma division) asked to give evidence, explaining he had not been notified of the hearing and was too ill to attend on the original date. The inspector adjourned the inquiry so Lucey could

testify. No information survives here on the outcome, but this shows how local councillors (in this case Lucey) were directly involved in labourers' housing debates.

As reported by the '*Cork Examiner*' during February 1908, Mr. J. T. Buckley, Local Government Board Inspector, resumed his inquiry into the Labourers' Acts improvement scheme promoted by the Macroom Rural District Council (RDC). The Council was represented by Mr. Purcell, solicitor, while Mr. Fitzgerald, solicitor (Mallow), appeared for the Land and Labour Association. Several other solicitors, including Messrs. C. W. Ashe, J. J. Foley, T. P. Grainger, and T. Lucey, were engaged in various cases. In the Clondrohid division, Mr. Daniel Quill applied for an extra half-acre on the lands of Gurranecoppal, with the occupier's assent. Quill admitted owing £7 10s in rent, but pleaded poverty, citing that he had a young family. The Guardians supported his claim. Denis Carroll requested a half-acre at Caherkeegane, though he owed four years' rent. The Guardians nonetheless recommended him. In the Kilnamartyra Division, William Tobin applied for a cottage at Inch South, occupied by Julia Browne. Mr. Grainger opposed, claiming the proposed site lay within five yards of his client's residence and was chosen out of spite. A similar objection was raised to Jeremiah Moynihan's application on the same lands.

Mr. Garrett Barry sought a cottage at Raleigh, occupied by William Good. Barry stated he had been refused three times already, and warned that without a cottage he and his family might have to enter the workhouse. Questioned closely, he admitted to keeping three cows, four sheep, and £25 in the Post Office Savings Bank, but insisted he was an agricultural labourer. The Inspector noted his thrift as "very creditable." The divisional councillors also supported him.

Key episodes and outcomes in the cottage programmes included:

- August 1909: Mrs Kate Foley of Springhill, Lissarda (a labourer's cottage tenant) appealed to the Local Government Board. She protested that Macroom RDC was demanding rent "for an uncompleted cottage and unfenced plot, and without any legal bond having been entered into by her". The Board's reply noted that the council intended to sue her in court, and that it "do[es] not interfere in such cases". (Mrs. Foley's case highlights conflict over tenancy terms.)
- February 1911: In answering a Parliamentary question, the Chief Secretary reported that "from the Minutes of the Macroom RDC" it appeared tenants had petitioned for an extra half-acre of land attached to their cottages. The council intended to "consider at an early date the question of formulating a new [cottage] scheme". (This shows the RDC actively noting tenant requests.)

These events demonstrate that labourers' housing occupied much council business. Plans often required Local Government Board sanction, and changes in local government structure (the 1901 creation of Macroom UDC) had direct effects on which cottages the RDC could build. In sum, Macroom RDC repeatedly sought loans and grant approval for cottages, and was held to account in Parliament over the pace and terms of building.

Roads and bridges in the rural area were also an RDC responsibility. By statute Macroom RDC was charged with rural road upkeep and minor public works. (Major county roads were handled by the County Council or the Congested Districts Board, but the RDC kept the

small by-roads.) Although specific records of particular road projects are sparse, the council would have expended its General District Fund on grading and repairing local roads, culverts and small bridges. Like other districts, Macroom RDC could apply for Public Works (Board of Works) loans for road or infrastructure projects; indeed, one surviving file shows Macroom RDC received a public works loan for a water-supply scheme (see below), implying it could similarly finance other works. In practice, routine road works were funded from the district rate and overseen by the RDC's sanitary or roads inspector, with County Council inspection.

Several sanitary functions (drains, sewers, nuisances, vaccination campaigns etc.) were largely handled by the County Council after 1898, but Macroom RDC retained some local duties. Under the 1898 Act, Cork County Council took over many public health tasks (former Poor Law functions) and Macroom RDC assisted in rural areas. The RDC would have supervised any local drainage or sewerage works, and enforced the Public Health Acts in villages. No major town sewerage scheme in the RDC (outside Macroom town) is recorded here, but Macroom RDC did undertake at least one significant water-supply and drainage project (below). In general, the Council's medical officer of health and sanitary committees (if any) would survey nuisances and require private works, with the RDC supporting vaccinations and contagious disease measures as needed.

In this period, Macroom RDC had promoted and constructed local water works. A key example is the Ballymakeery Water Supply: Office of Public Works records show that in 1907–1910 the Board sanctioned a £460 loan to Macroom RDC for the Ballymakeery supply scheme. This sum funded the construction of a

new spring/well-supply and the relevant piping for the Ballymakeery district. The council would have repaid the loan from the local rate. Apart from this, few larger drainage or sewerage projects are documented. (Any local drainage boards would have operated separately.) The water scheme would have improved sanitation by providing cleaner water to rural cottages. Overall, Macroom RDC relied on central loans for its most capital-intensive works, repaying them from the annual rate.

Macroom RDC did not operate in isolation. The 1898 reforms created parallel authorities: Cork County Council (CCC), Macroom RDC, Macroom Urban District Council, and the Macroom Board of Guardians (workhouse union). After 1898, Cork County Council assumed tax collection and general public health oversight. The Macroom union's clerk became clerk to the RDC, and many Board of Guardians members sat also on the RDC. In effect, such personnel and administration overlapped.

A major change came in 1901 when the town of Macroom was made a separate Urban District. Hansard records show this had immediate consequences: cottages planned for Macroom town (then a rural polling division) had to be withdrawn once the town left the rural district. Thereafter, the Macroom RDC covered only the surrounding countryside (divisions like Macloneigh, Candroma, Inchigeelagh, etc.), while the Macroom UDC handled the town's affairs. In 1909 a letter from Macroom UDC even appeared regarding the water rates on the workhouse site, indicating occasional administrative overlap (the workhouse straddled the old border). In sum, the RDC worked alongside Cork County Council on funding and oversight, and alongside the Board of Guardians on

local welfare – often with the same individuals involved.

Macroom RDC's budget came from local rates supplemented by government loans and grants. Under the 1898 Act, rates were collected by Cork County Council on behalf of the RDC and charged to district accounts. Each year the RDC set its rate (in the £ shilling) to cover any routine expenses and loan repayments. For large projects (housing, waterworks, etc.) the council applied for Treasury or Board of Works loans. For example, the Ballymakeery water scheme (above) was loan-funded. Parliamentary exchanges show the council's internal budgeting also affected outcomes. By 1914, the sum Macroom RDC itself allowed per labourers' cottage was deemed too low to get any bids. The Chief Secretary observed that the council needed to loosen its spending limits to attract contractors. In short, Macroom RDC managed modest finances; large advances (c.£400–£1000) for infrastructure had to be borrowed, while small schemes were rated locally.

During this period, the Rural District Council held triennial elections by electoral division (1899, 1902, 1905, 1908).

At a January 1910 Rural District Council meeting chaired by Mr. J. FitzGerald, the main item on the agenda was appointing representatives to the Muskerry Tramway Board. Mr. P. O'Leary was unanimously reappointed, thanking the Council and promising to defend their interests. He explained that while the line required a 5% dividend guarantee, his work had reduced the levy on ratepayers from 9d to 1½d in the £, which he felt was a fair contribution. Three members - Messrs. Hogan, Carroll, and Richardson - were also elected to a joint committee with the District Council.

The Council then debated whether Macroom district would benefit from steamrolling. The Chairman doubted it, citing earlier votes and political quarrels. Some argued that since a resolution had been passed in favour previously, it still stood. The County Surveyor suggested the issue could be revisited in nine months. Finally, the Council reviewed the County Surveyor's road and works estimate of £4,860, £100 higher than the previous year, partly due to steamrolling costs. A proposal to approve new works worth nearly £1,000 was defeated by 23 votes to 11, meaning the works would not go ahead.

SOCHAÍ

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SOCHAÍ

MACROOM BRANCH - TOWN TENANTS ASSOCIATION

In early October 1903, the '*Southern Star*' documented that a public meeting was held in Croome's Hall, Macroom, for the purpose of inaugurating a local Town Tenants' Association. Considerable interest was shown in the proceedings, and the attendance was large. Those present included Messrs. J. O'Shea, C.U.D.C.; the Hon. Secretary of the United Irish League's Co. Cork Executive, T.J. Cronin; R. Looney; John Fitzgerald; John Murphy, solicitor; Dr. Kelleher; T. Horgan; W. Murphy; T. Ring; P. Twomey; G. Sheehan; J.D. Murley; D. Brennan; P. O'Connor; O'Keeffe; J. Forde; R.C. Williams; R. Tobin; E. Bowler; T. Coughlan; P. Cunningham; James Kelly; O'Connor; S. Baldwin; M. O'Connell; J. Holland; T. Leary; J. Breen; Sheehy; P. Kelly; P. O'Keeffe; P. Horgan; M. Kelleher; R. Quill; J. Tracey, and others. On the motion of Mr. Murphy, solicitor, seconded by Dr. Kelleher, the chair was taken by Mr. John O'Shea, Chairman of the Urban Council.

The Chairman, warmly received, said that the town had long been assisting tenant farmers, but it was now time for the tenants in towns to act on their own behalf. He acknowledged that some support could reasonably be expected from rural friends. With the agrarian question nearly settled, the town tenants of Macroom deemed the time ripe to address their long-standing grievances. He assured the meeting that the principles of the new Association would not conflict with other local associations, but rather work harmoniously alongside them. He expressed the hope that tenants throughout Ireland would emulate their actions and begin a coordinated effort to redress grievances. Mr. John J. Murphy, solicitor, then addressed the meeting. He emphasised the importance of the town tenants' cause,

noting that they suffered from numerous pressing grievances that required immediate attention. He recalled a prior initiative in which local councillors had visited the Exhibition to explore opportunities for establishing a factory in Macroom, which he hoped would not be allowed to stall. In particular, a match factory was thought likely to succeed, as there was only one other in Ireland, located far to the north. He expressed hope that the newly established Association would enjoy a successful career. Mr. John Forde referred to several local cases of increased rents. Mr. Jeremiah J. Cronin, also well received, expressed his satisfaction at seeing such a large and representative assembly gathered to advance the cause of town tenants. Mr. John J. Murphy then proposed the following resolution, seconded by Mr. John R. Cotter, which was adopted unanimously:

> *"That, as the land question is virtually settled, we consider that the time has arrived to address the claims of tenants in villages, towns, and cities, and that we hereby form a Town Tenants' Association, to be affiliated with the General Executive of the Town Tenants' Committee."*

A large number of attendees immediately joined the Association, paid their subscriptions, and a significant sum was raised. The following officers were appointed:

- President: Mr. Jeremiah J. Cronin
- Hon. Secretary: Mr. J. O'Shea, C.U.D.C.
- Hon. Treasurer: Dr. Jeremiah Kelleher

- Committee: Messrs. J. Murphy, solicitor; R. Cotter; W. Murphy; Th. Kingston; M. Murphy; S.W. Baldwin, U.D.C.; John McCarthy; Patrick O'Keeffe;

E. O'Neill; and T.J. Twomey, U.D.C.

A vote of thanks to the Chairman brought the proceedings to a close.

The '*Southern Star*' remarked in December 1903 that It was considered a hopeful sign for those working in the cause of the Town Tenants that public boards were beginning to take up the issue. The matter, it was argued, particularly appealed to members of Urban Councils and Town Commissioners, since they directly represented the people most affected. They had recognised that, if any progress were to be made, they themselves must take part in the campaign. The branches of the Town Tenants' Association then in existence had, in fact, largely grown out of these local boards. In recent weeks, almost every such body in the county had adopted resolutions in sympathy with and in support of the movement. The resolution circulated from the Macroom Town Tenants' Association had been well received everywhere, stirring several districts into active involvement. It noted that, at a meeting of the Skibbereen Urban Council on the previous week, members commented favourably on the resolution. In the discussion it emerged that Skibbereen, like many other towns, was firmly in the grip of the landlords. Building ground was available only at such high prices that no one could seriously consider new enterprise. One councillor cited the case of a man who had to pay 7s. 6d. per foot for his premises—though later information suggested the true figure was 14s. Another, Mr. H. Cullinane, stated he was paying £1 per foot.

It was pointed out that, were Irish towns in a healthy condition, they would naturally have been growing. Prosperous men would have been investing their capital in new buildings, artisans and labourers would have had steady work, and workmanship would have been

encouraged. Instead, the opposite was true. Houses in many towns, once they fell into disrepair, were simply abandoned and left to ruin. This decline, worsened by the general economic depression, gave some once-bustling towns the appearance—and even the smell—of decay. While not all of this stagnation could fairly be attributed to landlords, they were seen nonetheless as one of the chief causes. Landlordism had long blocked development and remained as powerful as ever. It was suggested that if the town tenants followed the advice of the late Lord Salisbury and "agitated", they could redress their grievances. The moment was thought to be particularly favourable. A vigorous Town Tenants' Association, it was predicted, could force a satisfactory settlement through legislation within a few years. The responsibility, however, lay squarely with the tenants themselves. If they were determined to lift the burden from their shoulders, it was believed that within months there would be active branches of the Association in every town in Ireland.

As reported by the '*Skibbereen Eagle*,' a meeting of the Town Tenants' Association was held at the beginning of August 1904, with Mr. J. O'Leary, M.C.C., in the chair. Those in attendance included Messrs. John O'Shea, U.D.C.; Jeremiah J. Cronin, C.U.D.C.; R. Looney; John Fitzgerald; John Murphy, solicitor; T. Twomey; and R. Cotter. The Chairman reported that the Lord Mayor of Cork had agreed to convene a public meeting for the purpose of forming a branch of the Town Tenants' Association in the city. At a previous meeting of the Macroom branch, it was considered advisable that representatives from the Dublin Executive should address this gathering. Accordingly, Mr. Cronin wrote to Mr. Coughlan Briscoe, inviting him to attend the meeting arranged for Friday. Mr. Briscoe, however, replied that he could not be present. The Committee then discussed the possibility of having two members

of the Executive attend, if £2 were contributed towards their expenses. A further letter was received from the Executive stating that they did not usually send out organisers, but given the importance of Co. Cork, they would endeavour to send Mr. Field and Mr. Briscoe. Unfortunately, the proposed date did not suit, as Mr. Field was unable to attend on Friday. The Executive therefore suggested holding the meeting instead on the following Monday or Tuesday. It then fell to the Committee to ask the Lord Mayor to alter the date of the meeting accordingly. Mr. Twomey pointed out that the Lord Mayor had done nothing so far towards advertising the meeting. The Chairman explained that the Lord Mayor had left responsibility for advertising in the hands of the Macroom Committee. They had not realised how heavy the costs would be, but now that the work had begun, there was no choice but to see it through. Mr. Twomey argued that it was unfair for the entire burden of expense to fall on the Macroom branch, and that other established branches should share in the cost. Mr. Fitzgerald agreed, adding that it would be unreasonable for the Co. Cork people to expect Macroom alone to cover all incidental expenses. The Chairman responded that he had no doubt once a branch was established in Cork City, they would repay the costs incurred by Macroom. After further discussion, the Committee appointed Mr. J. J. Cronin to go to Cork City, interview the Lord Mayor, and arrange for the date of the meeting to be changed, as well as to make arrangements for its advertising.

In July 1906, an annual meeting of the Macroom Branch of the Town Tenants' Association was held in the Town Hall. The Very Rev. J. Canon Murphy, P.P., D.D., V.F., presided. Among those present were Messrs. Jerh O'Leary, M.C.C.; Jeremiah J. Cronin, U.D.C.; J. O'Shea, U.D.C.; T.T. Twomey; E. Bowler; Richard Looney; Jeremiah Connor; C.J. O'Sullivan; J.

O'Connor; R. Collins; M. J. Murphy; Matt Murphy; Callaghan O'Callaghan; J. Fitzgerald; Denis Delaney; George McNamara; J. McCarthy; E. O'Neill; James Fitzgerald; J. Gallwey; John O'Leary; D. Brennan; J. Murphy; P. Graham; H. Collins, and others.

Mr. Jeremiah J. Cronin explained that due to the illness of the secretary, Mr. D. Kelleher, the committee had been unable to submit a full report of the year's work. He briefly outlined their position for the meeting. In August of the previous year, the branch had held a large general meeting with very limited funds. After collections, they had raised approximately £13. The year's expenses amounted to about £5, leaving a balance of £9. The branch then paid an affiliation fee of £2 and sent a delegate to the Conference in Dublin in September. A further £1 was forwarded to the Ward Indemnity Fund. After covering various additional expenses, including printing and advertising, the branch found themselves in debt by 9s 7d. Mr. Cronin remarked that the branch had begun its work four years prior with very few members actively involved, but by this time their influence had spread throughout Ireland, and, as Canon Murphy noted, "the greater part of England" was also aware of their activities. Mr. Cronin highlighted that the movement was now progressing well across the country, and that the Macroom branch might justly claim some credit for this success. He then proposed a resolution for adoption at the meeting, which he hoped would gain approval:

> *"That we, the town tenants of Macroom, in public meeting assembled (Very Rev. Canon Murphy, P.P., D.D., V.F., presiding), call on the Government to pass a drastic Act to protect village, town, and city tenants in Ireland from the rapacity of house and property owners, believing that the present system of urban*

tenure is one of the greatest causes of emigration, pauperism, and depopulation throughout the land, and that copies of this resolution be sent to Messrs. Bryce, Chief Secretary for Ireland; the Attorney-General; Mr. J. Redmond, M.P.; Mr. W. Field, M.P.; and Mr. J.J. Clancy, M.P."

The resolution was seconded by Mr. E. Bowler. The Very Rev. Canon Murphy then put the resolution to the meeting, taking for granted that it was passed unanimously, as indeed it was. He expressed his full approval, remarking that it was a pity such resolutions were not passed more frequently throughout the country.

By July 1910, as outlined by the '*Cork Examiner*,' the first meeting of a freshly-elected committee of the Macroom Town Tenants' League was held in the Town Hall, Macroom. Mr. F. Dowler, Vice-Chairman, presided. Present were Messrs. W.J. Daly, C. O'Leary, John O'Connor, J. Vaughan, M. McSweeney, T.P. Cotter, Wm. Casey, Patrick Crowley, J. O'Connor, Jeremiah J. Cronin, and Richard Collins. On the motion of Mr. J.J. Cronin, seconded by Mr. Vaughan, Mr. Edward Cotter was appointed Secretary '*pro tempore*.'

In connection with the drafting of the League's rules, preliminary proposals were submitted and discussed. The Chairman noted that the rules covered important matters, and if the League was to remain effective and free from manipulation, it would be necessary to adopt the precautions outlined. There were no objections, and the rules were unanimously approved and formally adopted by the Chairman. The following resolutions were submitted and passed by the committee:

- Formation and Purpose: The League pledged to place the organisation of Town Tenants on a solid footing, aiming to make it a powerful and effective instrument for the defence and protection of members against the unjust actions of unscrupulous landlords, and to resist undue interference in tenants' affairs.
- Legislative Action: That the Irish Party should be called upon to fulfil the promise made at the last convention of town tenants, and to introduce legislation providing for fair rents in towns, a matter growing increasingly urgent due to persistent depopulation, trade changes, and other economic pressures.
- Parliamentary Support: That the Irish Party, through Mr. John E. Redmond, make at least four Members of Parliament available to assist town tenants, offering guidance and support in establishing local branches, negotiating property disputes, and addressing other tenant needs, with the aim of improving conditions for this often-overlooked class.

Mr. Richard Cotter expressed satisfaction in proposing these resolutions, noting that they accurately represented the sentiments of town tenants. The Chairman declared the resolutions passed unanimously, praising their clarity and constructive purpose. The committee also discussed rules regarding property purchases. It was agreed that no member should take up a house already occupied by another tenant without offering a fair and reasonable price, and that no outside interference should occur in such matters. Fair latitude was to be given to existing occupiers, and outside "house-jobbers" were to be excluded from intervening in Macroom. Regarding rent reductions, Mr. T.P. Cotter proposed a 15 percent reduction as a reasonable demand. Other proposals for 25 percent reductions were discussed, but none were seconded. The Chairman advised that any reduction should be reasonable, taking

all circumstances into account. He recommended that the League request reductions without specifying a fixed percentage, leaving flexibility in negotiations with landlords. Mr. Cronin concluded that the League's success depended on the collective effort of all members. Every effort should be made to strengthen the organisation, making it as effective as possible in defending tenants' rights and advancing their interests.

SOCHAÍ

References:

- *Cork Examiner 29/7/1910*
- *Skibbereen Eagle 6/8/1904*
- *Skibbereen Eagle 28/7/1906*
- *Southern Star 10/10/1903*
- *Southern Star 12/12/1903*

The traditional symbol of Macroom town.

Castle St., Macroom Urban
(Source: Irish Catholic Capuchin Archives, c.1930)

THE TOWN TENANTS ASSOCIATION IN KILLARNEY

As reported by the '*Kerryman*' regarding a meeting of the branch in December 1905, the Chairman said that he felt honoured to speak in the market town of Killarney on behalf of the Town Tenants' Association. He stressed that this was an important responsibility, and he did not claim any special ability, but wished to share a few thoughts with the meeting. He noted that Ireland was living in a time of progress. After decades of inactivity and neglect, people were beginning to awaken to their rights. This, he said, applied especially to the town tenants of Ireland - and to the tenants of Killarney in particular. This was met with applause. The land question, as noted, had dominated Irish politics, and rightly so, in their opinion. Ireland depended heavily on agriculture, and reforms were long overdue. But, he continued, it was now time for town tenants to focus on their own situation. The Town Tenants' Association gave them the opportunity to organise, to unite, and to demand fair treatment. He explained that the Association had several key objectives:

- To secure proper housing for workers in towns and cities, at fair rents.
- To abolish the unfair system of short leases, heavy fines, and the confiscation of tenants' improvements - practices that damaged the prosperity of towns and villages.
- To enable the tenants and workers to become homeowners, including through a major expansion of the Small Dwellings Act.
- To ensure land values were taxed fairly, easing the burden on ordinary ratepayers.

- To encourage town improvements, support local industries, reduce excessive freight and transport charges, and bring public pressure to bear on issues affecting Ireland's industrial and commercial life.

The Chairman criticised many landlords as unjust and self-serving. He described the situation of a tenant who rented a house at a high rent and asked for a lease, only to be told he must pay a large fine. The tenant might work hard for years, invest money in improving the property, and build up a successful business. Yet he had no legal protection for his investment. At any time the landlord could raise the rent, or evict him and seize the benefits of his work. This, he said, was even harsher than the treatment faced by tenant farmers. If Parliament delayed passing Mr. Clancy's Bill, the Association must use public opinion to demand change. On the issue of short leases, he explained that some landlords would only grant terms of 21 or 31 years. He called this system deeply unjust. As an example, he told of a Kenmare family whose father or grandfather had built a house at a cost of £200 or £300, on a ground rent of just five shillings. When the lease expired, the landlord raised the rent to six pounds. This part was met with cries of "Shame!" This, he said, was legal but grossly unfair. Finally, he spoke about the appalling housing conditions in the lanes, where three or four families were sometimes forced to live in a single small house. It was no surprise, he said, that people living in such misery turned to the public house for relief. Would it not be far better if they had clean, decent homes—even at a higher rent—where families could enjoy comfort and stability, instead of being driven into drinking and gambling houses?

At another meeting of the branch in May 1906, as reported by the '*Kerry Sentinel*,' the Secretary said that after a recent Cork City conference, he had written to

Mr. Briscoe, pointing out that the Association needed a dedicated organiser, and that he could think of no one better suited to the role than Mr. Briscoe himself. He suggested that an organising fund be set up, with each branch contributing. He had since received a reply from Mr. Briscoe, who had promised to meet him on his way to Castleisland, Co Kerry. However, as the Castleisland demonstration had been postponed, Mr. Briscoe wrote again, stating:

> *"The Bill which has now been completed will go far to remedy the grievances of town tenants. What we require now in this movement is absolute unity and a firm determination on the part of town tenants to stand together in the fight."*

The Chairman, Dr. O'Sullivan, then asked for suggestions on how best to bring Mr. Briscoe to the county and arrange a demonstration. Mr. Counihan asked whether there was any definite date yet for the Castleisland meeting. The Secretary replied that no date had been fixed. Mr. J. O'Sullivan suggested that Killarney would be the most central location for holding a county demonstration. The Chairman said they must decide whether to invite Mr. Briscoe. The Secretary noted that the committee had already approved the idea, subject to the sanction of the general meeting. He added that they had recently collected £3 by canvassing two streets, and he believed the funds would be sufficient to support a county demonstration if collections continued. The Chairman confirmed that it was the wish of the meeting to invite Mr. Briscoe to Killarney on the evening before the Castleisland meeting, so that he could meet delegates there and make arrangements for a county-wide demonstration. On the motion of Mr. Horgan, seconded by Mr. Warner, Mr. M. A. Rooney was appointed auditor.

A tongue-in-cheek article on the branch by the '*Kerryman*' from December 1908 refers to the healthy nature of the unit. It was documented that the Killarney Town Tenants held regular and enthusiastic meetings, and, as shown by the subscription list published elsewhere - they had built up a modest "war chest" to draw upon should any of their members have needed the League's help in a quarrel with a landlord. At that time, it suggested, the landlords were keeping quiet. But, it was wryly noted, if they were to return to their old ways - making exorbitant demands or taking up unreasonable positions, then the battle would begin. And such a battle, it was joked, would be every bit as stubborn and long-lasting as the struggles of the land war. The hope, of course, was that matters would not go so far; but, the writer added with a wink, if it came to that - so be it! His Lordship, the Most Rev. Dr. Mangan, Bishop of Kerry, had sent a kind and supportive letter to the Killarney Town Tenants. This raised no eyebrows, since the Bishop had always sided with those he believed oppressed. In earlier days he had stood against landlord tyranny in South Kerry, and won a hard-fought battle on behalf of a poor and half-starved tenantry, many of whom still remembered his manly part in that struggle. There had once been a Town Tenants' League in Listowel, though by this time it had fallen silent. Could it really be, the writer teased, that all their grievances had been resolved and the League dissolved for lack of work? A pleasant thought, perhaps, but unlikely. From what was heard, the town tenants of Listowel still had complaints enough. Surely, it was suggested with a touch of irony, Listowel ought to rally again, and join hands with Tralee, Killarney, and Kenmare. The article asked - and what of Caherciveen, Dingle, Killorglin, and the other towns? If there were tenants there, they must have been a most

contented family indeed - since, the editor joked, no one ever heard a word of complaint from them.

At another committee meeting in May 1910, the Chairman said that the annual collection and the enrolling of new members would be undertaken shortly. He expressed confidence that the town tenants would contribute generously, as they had always done. All that was expected from working men, he added, was one shilling—and surely, for so small a sum, it was well worth any man's while to become a member of the Association and ensure its support in times of difficulty.

The Secretary then read a letter from Mr. John Breen, High Street, Killarney, dated 16 April 1910:

> *"Dear Mr. Russell—Will you kindly convey to the members of your Association the expression of my very sincere gratitude for the resolution of sympathy with myself and my family passed by them on the occasion of our recent great affliction. I value this expression of sympathy all the more, coming as it does from an Association of my fellow-townsmen, with which I have been so closely connected since its foundation. I also wish to thank you personally for your kind message of sympathy. Yours sincerely, John Breen."*

The letter was ordered to be entered in the minutes.

Mr. Eugene O'Sullivan, M.P., then addressed the meeting. He said he was glad to see the branch working actively on behalf of the town tenants. The cause of reform, he observed, had been too long delayed, and the conditions of house tenure—and consequently of life—in Irish towns were extremely harsh. Of all the problems facing the nation, none was more urgent or

vital to Ireland's interests. Towns, he said, were centres of thought and influence, shaping public opinion, and it was essential that this influence should be healthy and independent. The current system, which left tenants at the mercy of house-jobbers and landlords, was not conducive to such development. Change, however, depended entirely on the tenants themselves. If their efforts were half-hearted, progress would be slow and limited. But if they engaged wholeheartedly and consistently in the movement, they would soon win their reward in the form of strong and beneficial legislation. Mr. O'Sullivan referred to the new Budget, which, despite the criticism it had received, contained at least one clause of real importance to town life. This was the proposal to levy a tax on land suitable for building near towns. Such a measure, he explained, should encourage landlords to sell building land at reasonable prices, enabling local authorities to provide cottages at fair rents. This would also prevent a recurrence of cases such as that in Killarney, where Lord Kenmare had demanded an exorbitant price for a small parcel of land, leaving tenants burdened with excessive rents.

Turning to the question of the sale of town houses under the Purchase Act, Mr. O'Sullivan said he intended to do all in his power to ensure that Lord Kenmare's town property was included in the sale of his estate. Success, however, depended on the active support of the tenants themselves. If they failed by allowing themselves to be misled by those privately in league with Lord Kenmare, then they would have only themselves to blame. He urged the branch to arrange a general meeting on the matter, and hoped that every genuine supporter of the movement would give it full and enthusiastic backing. He concluded by assuring the tenants that they could rely on him to do everything within his power to carry their cause to victory.

SOCHAÍ

References:

- *Kerryman 9/12/1905*
- *Kerryman 26/12/1908*
- *Kerry Evening Star 2/5/1910*
- *Kerry Sentinel 26/5/1906*

College St., Killarney Urban
(Source: National Library of Ireland)

SOCHAÍ

THE KENMARE TOWN TENANTS LEAGUE

A report from an October 1908 edition of the '*Killarney Echo and South Kerry Chronicle*' documents the formation of a branch of the association in Kenmare. A meeting was held in the Town Hall, Kenmare, for the purpose of establishing a branch of the Town Tenants' League. Mr. Daniel J. Sullivan was moved to the chair. Among those present were Messrs. W.J. Hartnett, H.D. O'Connor, M.D. O'Sullivan, R. Cousins, D. Cremin, J. Walsh, D. Tangney, T. Orpen, R. Hanley, W. Mehigan, E. Downing, J. Shea, J. Donovan, Timothy O'Connor, D.D. O'Connor, D. Maybury, T. Kelleher, T. Cronin, J. Shoehan, M. Guihan, J. Hurley, C. Buckley, E. O'Sullivan, G. Aldwell, D.J. McCarthy, T. Finnegan, M. O'Connor, D. Creedon, and T. Madden, ex-Head Constable, R.T.C. Mr. Daniel J. Sullivan, D. Maybury, M.D. O'Sullivan, and W.J. Hartnett were appointed Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer, and Secretary, respectively.

The Chairman addressed the meeting, stating that there was no reason why they should not establish a branch of the association in Kenmare. He noted that the attendees had spent much of their lives advocating for farmers, and that it was equally important to safeguard the interests of town tenants. While he believed there were no immediate cases of hardship in Kenmare, he suggested that the association could serve as a preventative measure against future difficulties. The first task of the branch was to appoint a committee of twelve members to carry out the work of the association. This proposal was agreed upon, and twenty-six names—practically all members present—were nominated for the twelve committee places. The

result of the voting was scheduled to be announced at the next meeting.

As per the '*Kerry Sentinel,*' in November 1908, a meeting of the Kenmare branch of the League was held in the Town Hall. The Secretary, Mr. Hartnett, produced the receipt for the branch's affiliation fee. The Secretary of the Central Executive had written regarding the House of Lords' mutilation of the Irish Housing Bill and requested that a resolution of protest be adopted. Mr. Aldwell then moved the following resolution, which he was confident would receive approval:

> *"That we condemn in the strongest manner the action of the House of Lords in destroying the Irish Housing Bill, which had the unanimous support of our Irish representatives and was passed by a large majority in the House of Commons, and that copies of this resolution be sent to the Prime Minister, the Chief Secretary, and Messrs. J. Redmond and J. Boland, M.P.s."*

Mr. M. D. O'Sullivan seconded the resolution. The Chairman suggested amending the resolution to specify "the House of Lords led by the Marquis of Lansdowne." The amendment was accepted, and the resolution was adopted. The Chairman expressed regret that more members were not present, noting that attendance had been better on previous nights. He observed that some members were reluctant to hold official positions in the League, fearing that the branch would soon be left in the hands of only a few active members. He had urged regular attendance and commitment from all participants. The Secretary reported that five new members had been enrolled since the last meeting. Fourteen members were appointed to

the branch committee: Messrs. Aldwell, Walsh, Donovan, Dr. McCarthy, Corkery, G. Courtenay, Clifford, T. O'Connor, R. Hanley, R. Cousins, E. Downing, M. D. O'Connor, D. J. McCarthy, and Orpen. The Chairman strongly discouraged taking any subscriptions from persons outside the meetings, with the exception of ladies. He emphasised that active participation was required and that the proper method for joining was attendance at the meetings and payment of subscriptions. Several members endorsed this view, and it was agreed that the practice would be enforced going forward. On the motion of the Chairman, seconded by Mr. M. D. O'Sullivan, Mr. Aldwell was deputed to represent the branch at the meetings of the Dublin Executive, with his expenses to be paid from the branch funds.

By December 1908, Mr Daniel J. Sullivan was presiding over monthly meetings, as outlined by the '*Kerry Sentinel*.' A discussion took place regarding the advisability of appointing a committee of the League to visit town tenants who had not yet become members. It was decided not to establish such a committee, and it was resolved that any person wishing to join the League should do so immediately, as after 1st January the League would consider whether or not late applicants should be refused membership. Mr. Timothy Harrington raised a complaint against his landlord. It transpired that the tenant owed approximately seven months' rent on a weekly tenancy at 1s 6d per week. The meeting concluded that there was no justification for League intervention in this case. Mr. J. Walsh, the landlord, stated that he would not evict the tenant provided he made an honest effort to pay the arrears. After routine business had been addressed, the meeting was adjourned.

By February 1909, it was reported at a meeting that it was decided that any case or grievance pertaining to tenancy that involved a member would not be considered by the branch unless the member had belonged to the branch for at least three months. Mr. M. D. O'Connor suggested that the branch consider demanding a twenty per cent reduction in rent from the house-owners, owing to the significant changes in business conditions. A discussion followed, and it was agreed to consider the matter at a full meeting. Mr. Aldwell then proposed a resolution congratulating the town tenants of Kilfinane on their courageous stand against oppressive landlords and for the example they had set for the town tenants of Ireland. He further proposed that copies of the resolution be sent to the Secretary of the Kilfinane Town Tenants' League. Mr. Guihan seconded the resolution. The Chairman remarked that it was a very proper resolution and commended the people of Kilfinane and Kilranelock for their gallant fight for their rights. Mr. Guihan added that the men of Kilfinane had shown great pluck and deserved support in their first stand against their landlord.

It was reported that the following month's branch meeting enjoyed a large attendance. The Secretary reported that he had received a letter from Lord Lansdowne's agent in reply to a resolution sent by the branch regarding the sale of the town to the tenants:

> *"Dear Sir,*
>
> *Your letter of the 3rd inst., written on behalf of the Kenmare Town Tenants' League and suggesting that the tenants be allowed to purchase their holdings under the Purchase Act of 1903, has been placed before Lord Lansdowne, and he desires me to reply. As the*

Land Act of 1903 does not contemplate the advance of Government money on the security of buildings, it appears that the Act cannot be utilised for a sale of houses to the occupying tenants unless they are prepared to provide practically the entire purchase money. For confirmation, I refer you to clause 11 (1 and 2) of the Lord Lieutenant's Regulations of 13th February, 1906, under section 23 (8) of the Irish Land Act of 1903, and to paragraph 22 of the Instructions to Land Commission Inspectors, dated 5th March, 1906. In these circumstances, it seems impracticable to apply the Land Act of 1903 to a sale of the town of Kenmare to the tenants, and His Lordship does not think that any useful purpose could be served by pursuing the matter further.

Yours faithfully,
W. Rochfort"

The Chairman had remarked that the letter was extraordinary, noting that towns such as Boyle and Athenry had been sold under the Act. He suggested that Lord Lansdowne might be attempting to confuse them with legal subtleties. The Chairman continued, stating that after nearly forty years in public life, Lord Lansdowne had learned the rights of property and that agricultural tenants were now owners of their farms despite previous efforts by landlords. He expressed hope that, in time, town tenants would attain similar independence. The letter was then handed to Mr. Guihan, a lawyer, for his opinion. Mr. Guihan replied that he would examine the matter and report later, which was met with applause. The Secretary noted that a copy of the letter had been sent to Mr. Coghlan Briscoe and that the matter could be further discussed at the next meeting. Dr. McCarthy suggested that the

gathering of townspeople presented an opportunity to make a national and political statement for the good of the country. He recommended that they protest against the misleading statements made by Lord Lansdowne and his son, Lord Kerry, regarding the condition of Ireland, which had been deliberately made for political purposes. The Chairman endorsed Dr. McCarthy's remarks, observing that these statements had been made in the House of Lords by Lord Lansdowne and in the House of Commons by Lord Kerry. He noted that Lord Lansdowne represented a prosperous segment of society, while Lord Kerry, in their view, represented both influential and bigoted families from the North of Ireland. A resolution protesting the statements of the Lord Lansdowne and the Lord Kerry was then proposed, passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned after the completion of routine business.

As documented by the '*Kerry Weekly Reporter*' in June 1909, the Hon. Secretaries of the All-Ireland meeting for association, recently held to protest against the Budget proposals, had subsequently written enclosing copies of the resolutions adopted at that meeting and invited the co-operation of the local branch. The Chairman suggested that it would be better to convene a special meeting of publicans specifically in reference to the Budget, noting that there was no doubt they would be struck very hard by the measures. Mr. P. Finnegan raised the question of the consumers, pointing out that they would ultimately bear the burden, as the increased costs would be passed on in the price of tobacco and whiskey. The Chairman explained that John Redmond did not wish the matter to be handled in connection with the Lord Mayor of Dublin. He did not favour a conference and believed the issue should remain entirely in the hands of the Irish Party, to act as they deemed proper. The Chairman expressed agreement with this approach, noting that from the

outset, private conferences between landlords, tenants, and other parties had produced no benefit for the Irish people. It was therefore considered best to leave the Irish Party to address the Budget directly. Mr. Daniel Maybury concurred with the Chairman's remarks. Consequently, no action was taken on the resolutions. After dealing with some routine business, the meeting adjourned.

The '*Kerry News*' documented in June 1910 that at a monthly meeting of the branch, Mr. M. Galvin proposed, and Mr. E. O'Sullivan seconded, the following resolution, which was passed unanimously:

> *"That the meetings of the branch be held fortnightly."*

The Secretary, Mr. W. J. Hartnett, then read the list of subscribers to the All-Ireland General Town Tenants' League Fund, which amounted to £17 5s. The Chairman expressed the Branch's gratitude to the people of the town and surrounding country for their generous contributions to the fund. On the motion of Mr. Aldwell, seconded by Dr. McCarthy, it was decided to send £15 of the amount collected to the Central Executive of the Town Tenants' League. The Chairman further proposed:

> *"That we request our secretary to write to Mr. Coghlan Briscoe as to the advisability of holding a public meeting here to try and push forward the sale of the town."*

Mr. Buckley seconded the proposition, which was carried. With there being no further business, the meeting was then adjourned.

At the turn of November 1910, the '*Ulster Herald*' documented that a largely attended demonstration of the town tenants of Kenmare was held, and among those who addressed the meeting were Mr. David Sheehy MP, Mr. Flavin MP, and Mr. Coghlan Briscoe.

As reported by the '*Kerry Weekly Reporter*' during November 1910, a letter was received from the Secretary of the National Executive, noting that an opportunity had now arisen to present the position of town tenants in the best possible light before the people of Ireland. It had been decided to summon a conference of town tenants to be held at the Mansion House, Dublin, on the 8th of December. The Branch was requested to appoint delegates to attend this important meeting. It was also advised that the Branch convene a social meeting to appoint delegates to the divisional convention for the selection of a Member of Parliament (MP). The Chairman remarked on the great success of the town tenants' meeting held on the 6th instant, observing that it had been as fine, orderly, and representative a meeting as had been held in Kenmare for many years. The appointment of delegates was then proceeded with. Messrs. G. Aldwell, M. Connelly, and T. Madden were proposed, though Mr. Madden declined to act and was replaced by Mr. P. O'Sullivan. Regarding the matter of representation in the Parliament of Westminster, Mr. Aldwell then proposed a resolution affirming that the time had come for repeated declarations in favour of town tenants to take practical shape through direct representation in Parliament, as this was considered the most effective way to recognise their claims. In this respect, he suggested the election of Mr. Briscoe for an Irish constituency at the next election. Mr. F. O'Sullivan noted that the League was non-political and could not suggest any representative. Mr. Hartnett seconded the resolution, which was subsequently adopted. Finally,

Mr. Jeremiah Sheehan raised a complaint concerning the condition of his house, and a committee was appointed to inspect the premises.

SOCHAÍ

References:

- *Killarney Echo and South Kerry Chronicle 31/10/1908*
- *Kerry News 13/6/1910*
- *Kerry Sentinel 7/11/1908*
- *Kerry Sentinel 5/12/1908*
- *Kerry Sentinel 20/3/1909*
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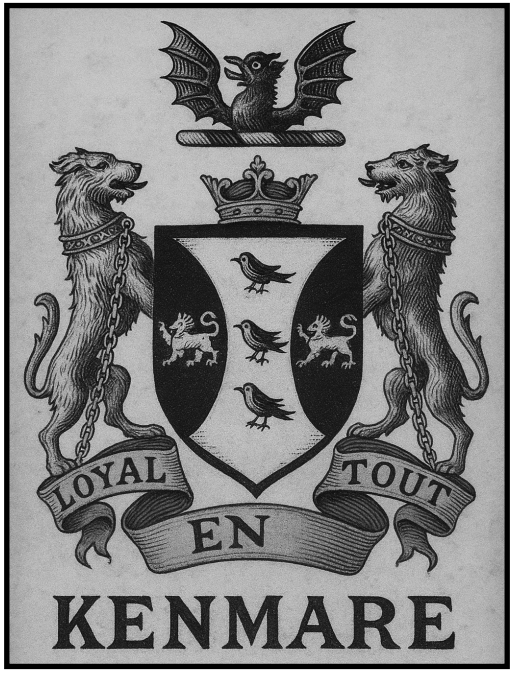

The traditional symbol associated with the Kenmare Estate.

SOCHAÍ

KENMARE RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

In May 1899, at an early meeting of the Kenmare Rural District Council, presided over by Chairman Mr. D. Doran, members discussed important measures to address the shortage of housing for agricultural labourers within the area. Present at the meeting were notable local representatives, including Messrs. J. Gaine, V.C.; C. Godfrey; A. M'Carthy, J.P.; T. J. O'Sullivan; P. Randies; E. O'Sullivan; M. Murphy; D. J. Sullivan, C.C.; and others. The Rural District Council had considered a communication from the Local Government Board regarding a Parliamentary grant of £40,000 in 1890 to aid the construction of labourers' cottages under the Labourers' Acts. Kenmare Union's share amounted to £175, which had remained unclaimed due to delays in implementing the Acts. The Treasury has now extended the period during which the Council may apply this grant for a further year, warning that failure to act would result in the forfeiture of the funds. The Chairman proposed using a portion of the grant to build the first labourers' cottage for an evicted tenant named Neill, whose housing situation had been highlighted by a Local Government Inspector. The proposal gained support from several members, including Mr. Maybury, who emphasised the severe housing shortage near the town and the need to relieve congestion in the local lanes. The discussion also considered the Council's powers of compulsory land acquisition and the importance of informing labourers about the scheme. An amendment was proposed by Mr. D. J. Sullivan to allocate the entire £175 grant towards a general scheme for constructing labourers' cottages across the Union, rather than focusing solely on Neill. After debate, the amendment was carried by a majority

of eleven votes, ensuring that the grant would benefit a broader range of applicants.

The meeting also addressed administrative matters. Mr. D. E. O'Sullivan was unanimously elected as Clerk of the District Council, with the question of his salary deferred to a special meeting. Regarding sanitary services, the Council agreed that only two sub-officers were necessary to fulfil the duties, rather than the six or seven previously in place. Several members were formally acknowledged for their co-option to the Council. Major Lionel Hewson, J.P., and Mr. Samuel T. Heard, J.P., expressed their gratitude, as did Mr. W. J. McClure on behalf of his father, Robert McClure, J.P., Kerry County Councillor.

The '*Cork Examiner*' outlined the early dates for Kenmare RDC's quarterly meeting dates in its first year of proper functioning. They were:

- 4 July 1899
- 3 October 1899
- 2 January 1900
- 3 April 1900.

As per the '*Kerry Evening Post*' in November 1899, at a special meeting of the Kenmare Rural District Council, Mr. D. Doran, J.P., presiding as Chairman, Mr. D. J. Sullivan proposed, and Mr. J. Gaine seconded, the following resolution, which was passed unanimously:

> *"That the Council are of opinion that, owing to the insufficient house accommodation for agricultural labourers in this union, it is desirable that an improvement scheme for the erection of 20 cottages be adopted."*

It was further decided that the scale of fees for medical officers inspecting labourers' dwellings be fixed at 3s per dwelling.

A notable meeting of the RDC took place during October 1901. It was held at the Kenmare Courthouse, with Mr. D. Doran, J.P., presiding as Chairman. Rural District Councillors in attendance included Messrs. W. Horgan, D. J. Sullivan, M. Murphy, P. W. Palmer, P. Casey, J. Kelly, Denis O'Sullivan, J. O'Sullivan, T. J. Lyne, G. Fitzgerald, George Maybury, and Jeremiah S. O'Sullivan. Also present were S. Goodwin, County Surveyor, and George Lucid, Assistant County Surveyor. The Clerk read a report from the County Surveyor on the condition of roads and public works over the past three months. The report highlighted neglect in road maintenance, noting that several important roads had not received adequate attention. Contractors were also reported to be behind schedule in preparing material for the coming season, which is critical for proper upkeep during winter and spring. The report emphasised the need to clear water-tables, gullies, and drains, warning that failure to do so would result in flooding and damage to the roads. Complaints had been received regarding roads previously in good condition now falling into disrepair. The County Surveyor stated his determination to compel contractors to fulfil their obligations, noting that most had fair contracts and some had taken work at unreasonably low prices.

Progress on specific works was also addressed:

- A protection work at Ballygriffin had been completed £10 under estimate.
- Work at Blackwater had been delayed due to heavy rains and had exceeded the estimate, necessitating an application for additional funds.

- Several other works had commenced but were not yet complete, with some requiring re-execution due to improper notification by contractors.

The Council unanimously adopted the report and approved the list of payments recommended by the County Surveyor. The Council then reviewed fourteen applications for new works or contracts, with a total potential expenditure of £218 5s 9d. Of these, five applications were rejected or withdrawn, and seven were approved, amounting to £84 2s 9d. The remaining business of the meeting was routine in nature.

At a Kenmare RDC meeting in July 1902, a letter was received from the Clerk of Works regarding the provision of a water supply for Kilgarvan. The estimated cost of establishing a suitable water supply was reported to be between £350 and £400. Mr. O'Leary emphasised the urgent need for a water supply in Kilgarvan. Other rural district councillors expressed concern over the high cost, describing the expenditure as enormous. Mr. J. S. O'Sullivan suggested that a pump might be provided as a compromise, but he opposed spending the full £400. The discussion was adjourned to allow for further consideration by the councillors representing the division. In other business, Mr. M. D. O'Sullivan was declared the contractor for the supply of Indian meal at £6 10s per ton and oatmeal at £14 5s per ton. The remainder of the meeting dealt with routine council matters.

A '*Kerry Sentinel*' report from 1905 would show how the RDC of Kenmare provided an important service for the mountain village of Kilgarvan. On the motion of Mr. Lyne, seconded by Mr. Herlihy, it was decided by a 13 votes against 5 to procure a water supply, with the cost to be charged to the dispensary district. In support of the motion, a deputation from Kilgarvan appeared

before the Council, consisting of Messrs P. Cronin N.T., J. Cronin N.T., J. Hegarty, F. Hickey N.T., R. Aldworth, and J. Maybury. Their representation helped secure the approval of the project.

A special meeting of the Kenmare Rural District Council (RDC) was held in February 1907 to consider representations lodged under the Labourers Acts. Although scheduled for half-past ten, only three councillors were present at that hour. Outside the Workhouse Lodge, however, a fair number of labourers and farmers had already gathered, freely discussing the Act and its potential benefits in good order. By twenty minutes past eleven, a larger body of ratepayers had assembled, and the Council finally convened. It was decided that applicants for cottages should not be present in the boardroom during proceedings. Mr. Brennan, Clerk of Works, reported on two issues:

- Kilgarvan Drainage: Mr. Patrick Quill had refused to allow a proposed drain to pass through his premises. Brennan suggested instead that the Council construct a new sewer through the street, discharging near the existing pump, and that occupiers make their own connections. The matter was referred to the Council's solicitor.
- Labourer's Cottage at Dromneycoleman: Brennan inspected the new cottage there and found several small deficiencies beyond those previously reported. While roughly built, he judged it substantially sound. Given the small contract and the difficulty of securing skilled labour in such an outlying district, he recommended that the Local Government Board Inspector be asked to review the cottage.

The Council then moved to the substantive business of considering approximately 110 representations under the Labourers Acts. Proceedings were conducted with

complete order both inside and outside the chamber. With only a few applications withdrawn, the work was completed in just an hour and a half. The efficient and business-like manner in which the Council discharged its duties was widely regarded as creditable both to the members and their electors. It also demonstrated the Council's clear desire to avail of the Labourers Acts in a reasonable and practical fashion for the welfare of the labouring classes.

SOCHAÍ

References

- *Cork Examiner 18/5/1899*
- *Killarney Echo and South Kerry Chronicle 12/7/1902*
- *Kerry Evening Post 15/11/1899*
- *Kerry Evening Post 23/10/1901*
- *Kerry News 25/2/1907*
- *Kerry Sentinel 6/5/1899*
- *Kerry Sentinel 1/2/1905*

The railway station at Kenmare
(Public domain photo)

SOCHAÍ

KENMARE BOARD OF GUARDIANS

As per the '*Kerry Weekly Reporter*,' at a special meeting of the Kenmare Board of Guardians at the turn of February 1902, Mr. David Damm, J.P., presided. Other Guardians present were Messrs. Walter McClure, Denis J. Sullivan, M.C.C., and Robert McClure, J.P. The Chairman explained that the meeting had been specially convened to consider the estimate and demand on the County Council for the forthcoming financial year. The Clerk submitted tables outlining the estimated liabilities and expenditure, together with the estimated revenue of the Board of Guardians for the financial year ending 31st March 1903. He also presented a calculation of the total sum required to meet the Board's expenses, which amounted to £4,085 3s. 10d. The estimate of liabilities and expenditure was as follows:

- Maintenance and clothing: £910
- Outdoor relief: £920
- Establishment: £1,090
- Workhouse burials: £18
- Maintenance in external institutions: £75
- Medical charities: £730
- Registration: £28
- National Teachers Act, 1875: £4
- Superannuation and retiring allowances: £197 9s. 4d
- Repayment of loans: £16 14s. 6d
- Examination of lunatics, coffins, and carriage of patients: £55

This gave a total of £4,044 3s. 10d. Adding the bill outstanding at the close of the previous financial year (£70), the total liabilities came to £4,114 3s. 10d. With receipts estimated at £29, the net sum required for the financial year was £4,085 3s. 10d. The Clerk stated that

the expenditure estimate for the year ending 31st March 1903 was £561 less than the previous year, representing a reduction of 6s. 4d. in the pound valuation. He noted that his last estimate had left a balance against the Guardians of about £70 at the close of the current year, owing to exceptional items of expenditure not foreseen, such as plumbing work and the building of a shed for the fever ambulance, amounting to £72. For the new year, he had estimated reductions of about £60 in outdoor relief, as well as further savings under several other headings. He reminded the Board that at the close of the financial year on 31st March 1901, there had been a deficit of £600, which had to be accounted for in the last estimate. By contrast, at the close of the present year (31st March 1902), the deficit was expected to be only £70. This explained the large reduction of £504 in the estimate and demand now presented. After a brief discussion, the Clerk's estimate was unanimously adopted. The District Council estimate was not considered, as the absence of a quorum made it impossible to proceed. The Chairman remarked that the very inclement weather was responsible for the failure of sufficient councillors to attend.

At an April 1905 meeting of the Kenmare Board of Guardians, held on a Saturday, Mr. T. J. O'Sullivan, Chairman, presided. Other Guardians present were Messrs. A. McCarthy, J. P. J. Beardon, and D. Foley. The Guardians approved fifty-two cheques amounting to £353 1s. 9d. Dr. McCarthy, Medical Officer of the Tuosist dispensary district, wrote requesting fourteen days' leave of absence. His application was granted, and Dr. J. Burgan was appointed to act as substitute, with remuneration fixed at £4 4s. The Clerk explained that half this sum would be reimbursed to the Guardians by the Local Government Board. The Local Government Board also wrote regarding the Guardians' resolution appointing the Cork Chemical and Drug

Company as contractors for the supply of medicines and medical and surgical appliances, despite their tender not being the lowest. The Board stated that, on this occasion, it would not oppose the Guardians' decision.

The Clerk reported that the lowest tender had been submitted by Messrs. Sumner and Co. of Liverpool, who offered a discount of 33⅓ per cent on the prescribed list. The Cork firm tendered at 26 per cent, but as it was an Irish company, the Guardians accepted their offer. The Chairman remarked that it was only right to give preference to an Irish firm which provided employment in the country. Rev. C. Brennan, C.C., Killarney, wrote in reference to the ongoing dispute between the Gaelic League and the Post Office. He stated that in matters of this kind it was clearly the duty of public boards to support the cause of nationality against the hostility of Government departments. He suggested that this could be effectively demonstrated by addressing all future correspondence solely in Irish. He was confident that merely making this suggestion would be sufficient for the Board to adopt it at once, adding that the reasons for such a step were so obvious that it would be impertinent for him to elaborate further. On the motion of the Chairman, it was agreed that all letters should henceforth be addressed in Irish. The Clerk expressed his willingness to carry out the Board's instructions. The Chairman confirmed that the Clerk was fully qualified to do so from that day forward. The remainder of the business was routine.

As referenced by the '*Kerry People*,' at the September 1907 meeting of the Kenmare Board of Guardians, several matters concerning health services and supplies came before the Guardians. Mr. Denis O'Sullivan, relieving officer, applied for an additional month's leave of absence, supported by a medical certificate

from Dr. McCarthy. The request was granted without opposition. The tender of Mr. John Quill, Kilgarvan, for the supply of bread to the workhouse was accepted at 4 7/8d. and 4½d. per 4lb. loaf for first and second quality respectively. His was the lowest offer, compared to Mr. R. Clifford's tender of 6d. and 5½d. Two candidates applied for the post of midwife in the Kilgarvan dispensary district: Mrs. Bridget O'Sullivan and Miss E. McCarthy. While Mrs. O'Sullivan applied on the advertised salary of £15, Miss McCarthy sought £20. The Chairman ruled that her application must therefore be withdrawn. On the motion of Mr. Lyne, seconded by Mr. Aldwell, Mrs. O'Sullivan was appointed. Her strong testimonials from several doctors were noted, and the decision passed without dissent. The Council also considered the lack of applications for the Sneem and Tuosist dispensary districts. It was agreed, after discussion, to re-advertise both posts at a salary of £15 each.

The most heated debate arose when Dr. F. G. Mayberry, workhouse medical officer, sought a fortnight's leave of absence and proposed to appoint Dr. M. Baker of Dublin as his substitute, whom he would pay personally. While some members, including Mr. Godfrey and Mr. Horgan, supported granting the leave outright, others objected. Mr. Gaine argued it was unfair to bring in an outsider while local medical officers struggled with low pay. Mr. E. O'Sullivan agreed, stressing the importance of fairness to local practitioners. Dr. Mayberry defended his position, noting that his earlier nominations of local doctors had been overruled by the Board, leaving him little option but to seek outside cover. He insisted that patient welfare should take precedence:

> *"It cannot be in the interests of the sick for any one medical officer to serve two dispensary*

districts and the workhouse hospital at the same time."

The discussion grew sharp at points, with exchanges between Dr. Mayberry, Mr. J. S. O'Sullivan, and Mr. McClure over whether there was an existing understanding to alternate appointments between local doctors. Dr. Mayberry denied knowledge of such an arrangement. Ultimately, on the motion of Mr. McClure, seconded by Mr. Horgan, the local Council resolved to grant Dr. Mayberry his leave under the terms he proposed, though not without considerable dissent and acrimony.

Mr. J. Gaine, Chairman, presided at the meeting of the Kenmare Board of Guardians held in September 1908. Others present were Messrs. J. S. O'Sullivan, V.C.; M. Murphy; M. Brennan; D. J. O'Sullivan, M.C.C.; T. J. Lyne; G. A. Aldwell; and E. O'Sullivan (Glanlough). The Clerk read a letter from the Hibernia Fire and General Assurance Company, requesting that the Board place the insurance of the workhouse buildings with them, as an Irish insurance company. It was unanimously agreed to forward a proposal to the company, with their reply to be submitted at the next meeting. A letter from the Local Government Board regarding the boarding-out of certain children in the workhouse was referred to the Visiting Committee. After some routine business had been transacted, the meeting adjourned.

In December 1910, Mr. John Gaine (Chairman) presided at the meeting of the Board of Guardians. Other members present were Messrs. D. J. Sullivan, M.C.C.; G. Aldwell; E. J. Tuohy; E. O'Sullivan (Kilgarvan); A. Palmer; J. S. O'Sullivan; J. Reardon; T. J. Lyne; and J. Egan. A letter was received from Julia Rice, night nurse in the infirmary, stating that owing to

failing health she could no longer efficiently perform her duties, and therefore tendered her resignation. She requested that the Guardians grant her the highest rate of superannuation, and expressed her gratitude for the kindness shown to her during her many years of service. A medical certificate from Dr. Mayberry, Workhouse Medical Officer, was enclosed. Mr. J. S. O'Sullivan observed that Nurse Rice would be a great loss to the Board and to the patients. Mr. Lyne enquired how long she had served. Dr. Mayberry replied that she had been in service for sixteen years, and he spoke in the highest terms of her faithfulness, conscientiousness, and kindness, noting her constant attentiveness to patients. He concluded that the loss of her services would be considerable. The Chairman and other members present endorsed Dr. Mayberry's remarks. It was decided to accept the resignation, and to consider the question of superannuation at the meeting to be held five weeks hence. Following discussion, it was resolved to advertise for a successor at a salary of £80 per annum, with apartments provided, but without rations. A letter was read from Mr. D. M. Moriarty, solicitor, stating that, in accordance with the Guardians' directions, he had forwarded the committal order to the Sheriff for execution against a police pensioner named Connell, residing near Sneem, for failing to comply with an instalment order in respect of the maintenance of his father while in the workhouse. A communication was received from the Local Government Board, enclosing returns from the medical officers of the union concerning vaccination defaulters: Kenmare, 220; Kilgarvan, 7; and Tuosist, 30. The Board requested that steps be taken to ensure strict compliance with the Vaccination Acts. Consideration of the matter was adjourned. The Secretary of Kerry County Council forwarded a minute of their last meeting showing that the total deduction from Government grants was £4,117, of which £77 was deducted from the grants to

Kenmare Union for the half-year. The Clerk explained that this amounted to three-farthings in the pound. Mr. D. J. Sullivan remarked that county charges amounted to about threepence in the pound. The resolutions of the North Dublin and Ballymoney Unions were then adopted. Mr. Lucid, engineer, submitted a plan for the proposed medical officer's residence and dispensary at Kilgarvan. On the motion of Mr. Lyne, seconded by Mr. O'Sullivan, the plan was adopted. The meeting then resolved itself into a District Council. Mr. T. J. Lyne, Vice-Chairman, presided. For the cutting of thirteen trees in Kenmare graveyard, two tenders were received —one for £10 and another for £14. As the Council considered both prices excessive, the engineer was instructed to carry out the work instead. The Clerk read a letter from Mr. Rochfort, agent to Lord Lansdowne, in reply to a Council resolution. It stated that his lordship was willing to grant, free of rent, a site which he hoped would be suitable for a public library in Kenmare. The Clerk was directed to convey the Council's thanks to Lord Lansdowne for his generous offer. On the motion of Mr. D. J. Sullivan, the Clerk was further directed to write to Mr. Andrew Carnegie requesting a grant of £2,000 for the building of the proposed public library. In reply to a question by Mr. D. J. Sullivan, Mr. Lucid stated that he would proceed immediately with the erection of the town lamps.

SOCHAÍ

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- *Kerry Weekly Reporter 1/2/1902*
- *Kerry Evening Post 26/4/1905*
- *Kerry People 28/9/1907*
- *Kerry Sentinel 12/9/1908*
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Kenmare Suspension Bridge at the turn of the 1900s (Source: National Library of Ireland)

SOCHAÍ

THE UNITED IRISH LEAGUE IN THE SHEHY MOUNTAIN REGION

A '*Cork Examiner*' report from early July of 1900 documents United Irish League (UIL) branch activity in the rural town of Killarney, Co. Kerry, and the village of Ballyvourney (Mid-West Cork) respectively. The meeting of the Ballyvourney branch was held with Mr D. C. Kelleher, R.D.C., presiding. Among those present were J. McSweeney, R.D.C., Cornelius Lynch, R.D.C., W. Kinslan, R.D.C., Daniel O'Leary, R.D.C., the Treasurer M. Lynch, T. Riordan, D. Riordan, D. Buckley, J. Kelleher, M. Quill, D. Linehan, D. Lynch, J. Dineen, Jeremiah Sheehan, M. T. Lucey, Mat Kelleher, and D. Quill. Amongst the business conducted included that several new members were enrolled, and six delegates were appointed to attend the forthcoming Divisional Executive meeting in Macroom on Wednesday, 11th July that year. The Treasurer was instructed to hand over £8 to the Treasurer of the Divisional Executive on that occasion. Meanwhile, in Killarney, Mr. Jerome O'Leary (Chairman) presided. Among those present included Mr. D. Myers R.D.C, P. Finnegan U.D.C., D. Carroll R.D.C, J. Murphy (Secretary) and others. The secretary declared that they had a meeting with the Divisional Executive and it was decided that all the local branches would commence to collect subscriptions for the upcoming General Election fund for Westminster. He believed that if they could gather £10, it would be best to forward it. Mr. Scannell asked how many members were enrolled as members, to which he was informed that approximately eighty people were such. Mr. Lyne believed that those who had not paid up should be expunged from the roll. The chairman noted that he would give notice to all members whose fees were outstanding. Mr. Finnegan suggested that committee members call house-to-house

for raising money. They were informed that the Urban District Council had given them permission to use the town hall for future meetings.

In 1904, the '*Kerry Sentinel*' reported that a very successful Nationalist meeting was held in Kilgarvan for the purpose of re-organising the local branch of the United Irish League. Despite persistent rainfall throughout the proceedings, there was a large and representative attendance, reflecting the strong support for the movement in the district. Adding colour and spirit to the occasion, the Kilgarvan Fife and Drum Band was in attendance, performing a selection of national airs before and after the meeting. The gathering was notable for the wide representation of surrounding districts. Those from Kilgarvan included Messrs T. J. Lyne, R.D.C.; C. Godfrey, R.D.C.; J. P. Quill; J. Hegarty; R. Aldworth; P. Quill; M. Sullivan (B.); J. O'Brien; Jerh Quill; D. Healy; John Quill; T. Reidy; P. Sullivan; D. Sullivan; D. Lynch; P. Delaney; M. Sullivan; D. Healy (evicted tenant); J. Lyne; J. Randles; T. Randles; P. Randles; T. Carey; D. Carey; M. Healy; J. Reidy; J. Sullivan; Patrick Quill; C. Finnegan; J. P. Randles, and many others.

Opening the proceedings, the Chairman outlined the purpose of the meeting: to reorganise the Kilgarvan branch of the United Irish League. Speaking in English, he observed that the local branch had not been as active or as strong as in the previous year. He urged all present to renew their commitment and to join the wider National Organisation, so that Kilgarvan would contribute to building a vigorous and effective League in the parish. The Chairman had further stressed the importance of beginning a new collection for the Parliamentary Fund, which supported the efforts of the Irish Parliamentary Party. Describing the Party as composed of "brave and staunch Irish Nationalists," he

praised its members for manfully and successfully fighting the battles of the Irish people. In conclusion, he called on those gathered to stand and work together in unity and determination. If they did so, he declared, they would hasten the day when landlordism would be swept away and every tenant farmer would at last be the rightful owner of the land tilled by generations of their families.

At the turn of May 1905, the '*Cork Examiner*' reported that, in accordance with a recent suggestion of the National Directory, a special meeting of the Mid-Cork Executive of the United Irish League was held in the Macroom Town Hall. The purpose was to organise constituent branches of the Executive in view of a likely General Election. On the motion of Mr. T.D. Sullivan, seconded by Mr. Patrick O'Connell, V.C. (Kinsale District Council), the chair was taken by Mr. John Fitzgerald, R.D.C., Lissarda. Delegates were present on behalf of the branches of the various local town-lands:

- Macroom Town: John J. Cronin, T. J. Twomey, D.C., E. McCullogh, C. Lucey, John O'Shea, R. Quill, John Twomey, Jerh J. Cronin, D.C., W. Baldwin, D.C.
- Clondrohid: T. O'Shea, D. H. Kelleher, John Corkery.
- Carriganima: T. Carroll, E. Walsh, John Lehane, D.C.
- Kilnamartyra: Dan Twomey, D.C., J. O'Connell, Dan Dineen, Michael O'Leary.
- Ovens: P. O'Connell, V.P., Kinsale District Council, Wm. O'Donovan.
- Aghina: Denis Chasley, Dan Daly, J. Lehane, P. Corcoran, J. Herlihy, M. Roche.
- Kilmurry: J. Fitzgerald, D.C., Wm. Field, D. O'Mahony, C. Carroll.
- Canovee: T. Sullivan, T. D. Sullivan, P. Murphy, Corns. Dunne.

- Cloughduv: Wm. Cremin, Timothy Gould, Jerh Lyons.

The Chairman regretted the absence of Rev. Father McAuliffe and other senior figures, but warmly welcomed Mr. Kilbride and Mr. D.D. Sheehan, M.P.. A resolution, proposed by T. D. O'Sullivan (Canovee), seconded by Jeremiah Lehane (Carrigadrohid), was passed condemning the serving of writs on tenants, despite their offer of terms above the net income. The resolution called for a 20% abatement if landlords refused, and urged the matter be placed before Parliament. It was adopted unanimously. Mr. D. D. Sheehan M.P., strongly supported the resolution, stressing the need for every branch to assist tenants under threat. Mr. Sheehan, M.P., was warmly received. He congratulated the constituency on the strength of its organisation, declaring Mid-Cork to be "the best organised constituency in Ireland." He appealed for unity between the United Irish League and the Land and Labour Association, urging co-operation between farmers and labourers "whose interests are often identical." He reminded members of the support labourers had given to agrarian struggles and insisted they were now entitled to the farmers' sympathy, support, and financial backing, particularly during the forthcoming Labour Collection Week in May of that year.

By September 1905, another meeting was held in the Cork-Kerry border village of Kilgarvan, for the purpose of reorganising the local branch of the United Irish League. The gathering, though not very large, was described as harmonious throughout, and drew a fair attendance from the parish. The chair was taken by the Rev. D. McGillycuddy, P.P., Kilgarvan, and amongst those present were: Mr. J. P. Boland, M.P. for the division; Mr. Denis J. Sullivan, M.C.C., President of

the South Kerry Executive; Mr. C. Godfrey, R.D.C.; Mr. T. J. Lyne, R.D.C.; Mr. E. O'Sullivan, R.D.C.; Mr. P. Dineen, R.D.C.; Mr. J. D. Healy; Mr. M. Healy; Mr. J. O'Brien; Mr. P. O'Sullivan (C.); Mr. W. Gaine; Mr. P. Randles; Mr. D. Healy (evicted tenant); Mr. J. Quill; Mr. Jeremiah Hegarty; Mr. C. Callaghan; Mr. J. Cremin; Mr. P. Sullivan (G.); Mr. P. Delaney; Mr. G. Rice; Mr. J. P. Randles; Mr. R. Aldworth; Mr. J. Sweeney; Mr. P. Quill; Mr. J. Lynch; Mr. M. Cremin; Mr. J. Lyne; Mr. J. Donovan; Mr. J. Maybury; Mr. P. Sullivan, and many others. The Rev. Chairman, greeted with loud applause, first spoke in Irish before continuing in English. He warmly welcomed Mr. Boland, noting that even though the meeting was only a "scratch" one, the turnout was proof of the high regard in which their member was held. He referred to the likelihood of a general election, and declared that any opposition to Mr. Boland in South Kerry would be as hopeless as "ramming one's head against a stone wall." His remarks were met with cheers and laughter before he invited Mr. Boland to speak. Mr. Boland, who was cordially received, began by expressing his delight that the Chairman had opened in Irish, as he hoped to see the language restored to the place of honour it once held. He urged that the Irish language be used as much as possible at national gatherings. He apologised for the short notice of the meeting but welcomed the chance to meet his constituents. Since his election five years ago, he explained, he had attended Parliament regularly, only absent when illness or party duties required. He stressed the importance of unity and strict attendance in the Irish Party. Turning to local matters, Mr. Boland expressed regret that the Kilgarvan branch of the League had declined in recent years, despite its tradition as a stronghold of national spirit. He urged the people to reorganise without delay, so that their voices could again be heard in Parliament. On the land question, he noted that several estates in the district had

yet to be sold. He warned against paying excessive prices for land, reminding farmers that the real test was whether instalments could be met both in good and bad years. Mr. Boland also spoke on the Irish Language Revival and the Industrial Movement, urging strong support for both. He concluded with an appeal for unity:

> *"The United Irish League is a powerful weapon when wielded by a united, organised, and determined people."*

His speech was met with loud and prolonged cheering. Mr. Sullivan, President of the South Kerry Executive, followed. He reminded the meeting of the progress of the past quarter-century — the concessions won from England, and the transformation of the Irish farmer from near-serfdom to relative independence. Yet, he declared, much remained undone:

- National Self-Government for Ireland
- Catholic University Education
- Fair treatment for town tenants and labourers

All these, he argued, could only be achieved by the people banding themselves together in a strong national organisation. The meeting closed with renewed determination to reorganise the Kilgarvan branch of the United Irish League, ensuring that the district would once more play its part in the national movement.

In February 1906, the '*Southern Star*' documented that a large and representative public meeting was held in Ballymakeera Town Hall under the joint auspices of the Ballyvourney branches of the United Irish League and the Land and Labour Association, to express sympathy with the tenants of the Colthurst estate in their present struggle for the purchase of their holdings. The

gathering was an imposing one, the hall being thronged with tenant-farmers, labourers, and representatives from the surrounding districts. The Ballyvourney, Kilnamartyra, and Clondrohid Bands accompanied contingents into the town, and discoursed stirring national airs before and after the proceedings. The meeting was presided over by Rev. Father Walsh, P.P.

Delegations attended from many districts, notably:

- Ballyvourney United Irish League – Rev. M. Walsh, President; Rev. M. O'Sullivan, C.C., Vice-President; J. McSweeney, Treasurer; D. O'Leary, J. McSweeney, R.D.C.; Daniel Riordan, J. A. Lynch, W. Maybury, M. Finnegan, J. Humphrey Lynch, J. Twomey, J. Kelleher, John Quill, D. Lissy, T. Twomey, O. Sullivan, D. McCarthy, M. Riordan, D. Buckley, J. O'Connell, J. Riordan, P. Leahy, and a very large contingent of supporters.
- Clondrohid Band – J. O'Leary, J. O'Shea, J. Creedon, W. Creedon, D. Kelleher, T. Kelleher, J. Cronin, M. O'Connell, T. O'Connell, and others.
- Sheveragh Land and Labour Association – H. J. Crowley, J. Kelleher, T. Buckley, A. Casey, D. Lynch, J. Twomey, D. McCarthy, P. O'Connell, and many others.
- Coolea L. & L.A. – P. Lynch (junr), P. McSweeney, M. Twomey, T. Dineen, O. Moynihan, D. McCarthy, D. Cronin, E. Sweeney.
- Glenflesk U.I.L. – D. R. D. C., T. Kelleher, J. Donoghue, J. Lynch, M. Horgan, T. Dineen, J. Lucey, J. McCarthy, C. Lucey, P. Quill, E. Sweeney.
- Barraduff U.I.L. – C. Kerry, J. Mullane (Hon. Sec.), J. O'Sullivan, R.D.C., C. O'Leary, H.D.
- Kilnamartyra – E. Goold, M.C.C.; J. Twomey, R.D.C.; M. Lucey, R.D.C.; P. O'Connell, Hon. Sec.; J. O'Connell; D. Buckley; D. Dineen; M. Healy; J. Casey; R. Lynch; P. Kelleher; M. Walsh; and a

contingent of over 65 horsemen, accompanied by the Kilnamartyra Band.
- Carriganima U.I.L. – J. Lucey (Sec.), E. Walsh, J. Walsh, J. Kelleher, J. Healy, J. Healy (jr), P. O'Leary, T. McSweeney, D. O'Leary.

Strong contingents were also present from the branches of Ahabullogue, Macroom ILLA, and Killarney. Mr J. O'Shea, chairman of the Cork County Executive Committee, was also in attendance.

Rev. Father Walsh, P.P., who was enthusiastically received, had congratulated the gathering on its representative character. Since last they had met in the League Rooms, he said, many important events had taken place:

- The strongest Tory Government in generations had been hurled from office (cheers).
- A new Government, with a majority unprecedented in half a century, was now in power, and he hoped it would be friendly to Ireland (hear, hear).
- Ireland once again had a united Parliamentary Party of 83 members, whose combined influence could turn the scale in Parliament and "hurl from office any Ministry that refused the just claims of Ireland."

The present issue before them, he continued, was the struggle of the Ballyvourney tenants on the Colthurst estate to purchase their holdings. The Land Act of 1903 gave tenants the opportunity to become owners of their ancestral soil. The Colthurst tenants were negotiating under its provisions, and he called upon their solicitor, Mr. Lucey, to explain the present position.

Mr. Lucey (solicitor) reported that negotiations with the landlords had been ongoing for over three months. The first offer provided for a reduction of 6s in the £ on

second-term rents, half a year's rent (to September 1905) to be forgiven, and arrears due up to March 26th to be wiped out. A second landlord's offer proposed only a reduction of 4s in the £, plus remission of the half-year's September rent. The tenants, he said, considered the latter offer inadequate, and the meeting was called to express their support for the tenants in holding out for a fairer settlement. The following resolutions were passed unanimously amid great enthusiasm:

- Support for the Tenants – That this meeting pledges its fullest sympathy and practical support to the tenants of the Colthurst estate in their just demand for fair terms of purchase.
- Condemnation of Inadequate Offers – That the landlord's present offer of a reduction of 4s in the £ is entirely insufficient, and that the tenants are right to refuse to accept less than 6s in the £, as offered on other estates.
- Unity of Farmers and Labourers – That farmers and labourers in Ballyvourney and surrounding districts will continue to act together for their mutual benefit in the settlement of the land question.

As reported in the '*Freemans Journal*,' by September 1909, a well-attended meeting of the branch was held on one night for the purpose of appointing fresh officers and committee members for the Macroom UIL branch. The election took place, and the results were the following:

- Chairman: Mr. John Twomey
- Treasurer: Mr. J. J. Cronin, U.D.C.
- Hon. Secretary: Mr. T. J. Cronin

The following were elected to the Committee: Messrs. J. J. Cronin, Richard Quill, P. Leahy, J. J. Kelleher, J.

Fitzgerald, James Neville, Dr. Gould, Dr. Kelleher, Dr. Hartnett, C. O'Leary, and John O'Shea, C.U.D.C.

Arrangements were also made to provide a suitable reception for Mr. John O'Callaghan and Captain O'Meagher Condon on the occasion of their forthcoming visit to Macroom. The Hon. Secretary was instructed to communicate with the secretaries of the various leagues and societies in the town, inviting delegates to a meeting for the formation of a general reception committee. Mr. J. O'Shea, Chairman of the Urban Council, explained that the Council had already resolved to include Mr. John O'Callaghan's name in their official address of welcome. At the time of passing the resolution, it had not been publicly announced that Mr. O'Callaghan would accompany Captain Condon. He assured the meeting, however, that as Chairman he was as anxious as anyone present to give both distinguished visitors the heartiest and warmest welcome.

An interesting meeting of the Kilgarvan Branch of the United Irish League was held in early January 1910, under the chairmanship of Mr. John O'Brien. Also in attendance were Mr. Daniel O'Leary (Vice-Chairman), Mr. John Sullivan (Assistant Secretary), Mr. Patrick Healy (Treasurer), together with Messrs. Maurice Healy, Timothy Shine, John Buckley, and Denis Sullivan. The proceedings were marked by the presence of the evicted tenant, Mr. Thomas Gill, of Lounihan. A resolution was unanimously adopted, in which the branch members expressed their strong condemnation of the behaviour of Mr. Orpen, Ardtully, for his continued refusal to come to a settlement with Mr. Gill. The resolution was carried with much approval, and members voiced their determination to support the cause of the evicted tenant.

As reported by the '*Irish Independent*,' a well-attended meeting of the Macroom branch of the United Irish League was held in May 1910 under the local presidency of Mr. John Twomey. The principal business before the gathering was to organise a further collection in aid of the Irish Party Fund and to make arrangements for sending a delegation to Mr. Redmond's meeting in Cork on May 22nd that year. It was unanimously decided to hold the collection on May 29th, and several members present, including Canon Murphy, Dr. Goold, Dr. J. Bradley, and Mr. T. J. Twomey, J.P., generously doubled their subscriptions. Canon Murphy also announced that he had received the sum of £1 6s from Miss Richardson, being the proceeds of a concert recently given in the Town Hall, which she desired should be handed over to the trustees of the Irish Party Fund. Mr. A. Roche, M.P., who was present, addressed the meeting at length. He urged caution in judging Mr. O'Brien, acknowledging the part the latter had once played in the national struggle. However, he declared that Mr. O'Brien, by his present actions in opposing and undermining the work of the Irish Party, had placed himself against the national cause. Mr. Roche condemned in strong terms the attempt by Mr. O'Brien and his followers to organise a counter-demonstration in Cork on May 22nd, describing it as "the most impertinent intolerance," and one which he, as a Cork man with nearly thirty years of public service, utterly resented. Mr. Roche went on to affirm that any expectation Mr. O'Brien might supposedly have of driving him from public life would prove mistaken. "In my deliberate judgment," he declared amid applause, "Mr. William O'Brien will never again be member for Cork City." Turning to the financial proposals before Parliament, Mr. Roche described the present Budget as the best Ireland had seen since the Union, and expressed confidence that within a limited number of years a Parliament in Dublin would be secured,

enabling the Irish people to manage their own affairs. Further remarks in support of the national cause were made by Mr. Foley, solicitor, Dr. O'Donoghue, and Dr. Goold.

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THE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT IN THE SHEHY REGION

The Kilcorney Co-operative Dairy Society was established in 1891, and served as a major part of the area's socio-economic life until its closure in 2003, at which point it had become a branch of the modern Dairygold chain of stores. At its height, the Kilcorney creamery employed 50 people.

An article contained in the '*Cork Examiner*' from October 1905 reports that Mr. J. Pomery, manager of the Kilcorney Co-operative Dairy Society, wrote that he hoped that a deputation that had been formed to meet IAOS leader, Sir Horace Plunkett, would be able to do something to influence the vice-president to take action to "safeguard the Irish interests as present at the mercy of swindlers, as I cannot call 'butter faking' by a milder term." He believed that they had little reason to assume that an administration based out of Dublin Castle would comply with a "popular and just demand" at that time. Pomery asserted that they were "more likely to refuse again and again," and would only provide "half measures" when it was already too late. At the same time, he remarked that they ought not to relax their efforts "to obtain some protection for the honest Irish population." The meeting at hand wished to devise away to protect Irish interests in the English butter market.

At the time of the 1899 conference of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society conference, held in Cork City, the Macroom Agricultural and Dairy Co-operative Society possessed Mr. John O'Mahony as its chairman, and Mr. J. Kelleher as its honorary secretary. The nearby Toames Society had PJ Murphy as chairman, J. O'Regan as Manager, and JM Murphy, C

Creed, J Murphy, J.T O'Mahony, D Desmond, D Buttimer, E Wall, and M Murphy as senior members. Meanwhile, at the Hornhill-based society, Jeremiah Crowley was listed as chairman, Patrick Kelleher was listed as its manager, and both James Crowley and Eugene Corcoran were listed as senior members.

In 1900, a testy opinion submission to the '*Cork Examiner*' remarked that a letter in a previous issue had remarked of the society in Toames, located in the parish of Kilmichael, near Macroom, stands one of the new Irish Agricultural Organisation Society creameries. Within the same building operated a co-operative store, owned and managed by the same society. What supposedly began as a creamery for processing milk had now expanded into a general emporium, carrying on trade once reserved to towns and villages. On its shelves could be found meat, tea, sugar, candles, soap, starch, blacking, seeds, oils, pikes, whips, horse tackle, pig-rings, and much more. Eggs, poultry, and fowl were also purchased there. Farmers delivering milk often called into the store before leaving, taking home whatever goods were needed.

It was suggested that the result was clear: local businesses based along the routes to and from Toames were shunned. Already the effects were allegedly being felt in Macroom and other trading centres. This criticism opined that, if this system continued unchecked, in a few short years ordinary trade and competition may be destroyed. The co-operative "syndicates" would become masters of the situation, free to buy and sell as they pleased. That wholesome rivalry between individual shopkeepers, the very life of trade, would supposedly vanish. The situation recalled a saying once heard at a Land League meeting two decades previously. When a farmer orator cried "The land for the people," a labourer shouted back, "And

who are the people?" The answer came: "We are the people - the farmers." So, according to the person expressing their opinion, it seemed again. These creameries, run by farmers for farmers, risked becoming exclusive monopolies. Yet the land, and the fruits of it, were meant for all. They suggested that, unless wiser counsel prevailed, the co-operative system may soon find itself riding for a fall - challenged by those outside its supposedly privileged circle, who were also God's creatures, equally entitled to a share in the earth's bounty.

The Sessional Papers (Industrial & Provident Societies returns) list the "Macroom Co-operative Agricultural and Dairy" as amongst the active societies registered in the year 1901. The Kilnamartyra Co-operative Agricultural and Dairy, Clodrum/Codrum Co-operative Poultry, Horn Hill Co-operative, and the Clondrohid Co-operative Creamery Society all listed in the same record is further evidence of a cluster of co-operative commerce around Macroom.

In a 1907 advertisement by Macroom auctioneer Richard Quill for a compact farm in Clondrohid parish, it is noted that the area possessed the aforementioned creamery.

A 1994 article in the '*Corkman*' newspaper outlined how a 17th century mill site, which had become defunct by the end of the 19th century, was bought by the Clondrohid Co-operative Society, on which the creamery was built.

According to a 1997 article by the same newspaper, it is corroborated that the Kilcorney Co-operative Dairy Society had been established in 1891. In 2002, an article in the '*Corkman*' highlighted how the Kilcorney Fheis, described as a "historic festival, celebrating the

best of Irish music, song and dance," had been hosted by the Kilcorney Co-operative Dairy Society's headquarters in 1910. It had been organised by Mr. Liam O'Buachalla.

References:

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- *Cork Examiner 27/11/1907*
- *'The Co-operative Creameries of Mid-Cork.' Lee Valley Outlook (2024)*
- *'Sessional Papers (Industrial & Provident Societies returns)' (1901)*
- *Southern Star 14/10/1899*

An example of milk churns awaiting collection outside a farm.
(Source: Beaford Archives, England)

The Clondrohid Dairy Co-operative Society grew at the turn of the Edwardian era. (Source: The Cork Co-Operator, June 1939)

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LAND & LABOUR ORGANISATION IN THE EDWARDIAN SHEHYS

On the eastern side of the Shehy region, it was reported by the '*Skibbereen Eagle*' in September 1900 that, following closely on the recent demonstration of the United Irish League (UIL), the Irish Land and Labour Association (ILLA) held a great public meeting in Macroom on a Sunday afternoon. The event, favoured by beautiful and seasonable weather, drew a gathering at least as large as the League's, with many observers noting that the balance of numbers leaned towards the labour cause. Many of the most prominent local figures —who had shared the League platform a week earlier —again lent their support, this time to the workers' movement. Deputations from Aghabullogue, Ahina, Ballincollig, Inchigeela, Rahalisk, Carrigrohanebeg, and beyond arrived in force, bearing colourful banners emblazoned with labour mottoes. The Macroom and Millstreet Bands provided music before and after proceedings, further enlivening the atmosphere of enthusiasm and solidarity. The platform included Lord Emly, Dr Tanner M.P., as well as Messrs M. Healy, T. D. Healy (Chairman R.D.C.), D. Lynch (R.D.C.), C. Neville, J. Daly, T. Burke, W. Murphy (R.D.C.), J. O'Sullivan, J. Cullinane, M. Callanan, Dr Gould, and many others. On the motion of Mr Collins, R.D.C., seconded by Mr Williams, R.D.C., Mr J. Hodgins, Co. C., was elected chairman of the meeting. In his opening remarks, the Chairman declared the gathering to be one of the largest demonstrations ever held in Macroom, a clear proof that the working men of Mid-Cork were alive to their duty and determined to organise under the banner of the Irish Land and Labour Association.

Addresses of welcome to Lord Emly were read on behalf of the Macroom, Aghabullogue, Ahina, and

Ballincollig branches. Letters of apology were also received from several prominent supporters unable to attend. Resolutions were then carried unanimously, including:

- Full adherence to the principles of the IL&LA as the only organisation worthy of workers' confidence.
- A demand for direct labour by County Councils and strict limits on road contracts.
- Calls for amending the Labourers' Acts and Housing Acts to cover artisans, fishermen, and smallholders.
- Urgent relief for town tenants, with fair rents, fixity of tenure, and protection from eviction.
- Reform of the Local Government Act to restore landlord liability for rates on small holdings.
- The right of labourers to direct representation within the Nationalist Party.
- Support for the Gaelic League and compulsory teaching of Irish in schools.
- A pledge to foster Irish industries and manufactures.

Lord Emly was received with rapturous enthusiasm. He declared himself honoured to stand on a platform of working men and hailed the demonstration as "no got-up, no bought meeting, but the spontaneous outburst of the democracy of Cork." With poetic flourish, he likened the spirit of Co. Cork to the storm-wracked waves of Dunmanus Bay, the wild peaks of Gougane Barra, and the tranquil beauty of Glengarriffe. The IL&LA, he said, was born in that rebel garden of Cork and represented the true, fierce, and sublime nationality of Ireland. Turning to grievances, Lord Emly spoke movingly of the labourer's lot—of sweatshops, drudgery, and hopeless toil—and contrasted it with the hypocritical outcry of John Bull over the "oppressed" Uitlanders in South Africa. He drew pointed parallels between Boer grievances and Ireland's own long struggle against injustice, declaring the labourers' cause

to be both just and irresistible. Dr Tanner, M.P., also spoke with passion, welcoming the absence of friction between the ILLA and the United Irish League. He warned, however, that if the League failed to aid labour's cause, he would have strong words to say. Other speeches followed from Messrs J. J. Cronin, C. P. O'Sullivan, and J. Murphy (solicitor). As the meeting closed, Dr Tanner and Lord Emly were escorted to the railway station by a large and cheering crowd, accompanied by the bands. They received a most enthusiastic send-off, a fitting conclusion to a day which affirmed the growing power of labour in the politics of County Cork and beyond. Apologies for inability to attend were read from some city and county councillors, as well as Mr. D. Kelly (President of the Cork Trades Association).

Those delegates from the Macroom town branch included T. Kingston, P. Carroll RDC, M. Purcell (solicitor), R. Collins RDC, and J.J Dennehy RDC. Branches from the surrounding town-lands featured J. Murphy RDC, D. Quill, D. Creedon and P. Goggin of Rahalisk; J. Herlihy, R. Donoghue, and P. Buckley of Carrigrohanebeg; Mr. J. O'Donoghue of Bandon; P. Looney, J. Huggard, S. Quill and C. Regan of Aghina; J. Casey, P. Twomey, T. Long and E. Moynihan of Aghabullogue.

A few years later, during October 1905, as it was noted by the '*Skibbereen Eagle*,' a large and enthusiastic Labour demonstration was held, under the auspices of the local branch of the Land and Labour Association. The gathering was notable for the sight of farmers and labourers standing side by side, the farmers, many of whom were by this time owners under the Land Purchase Acts, giving their full support to the labourers' movement. Delegations had arrived from numerous districts in south and west Cork, with the Bandon

Workingmen's Band providing music throughout. Proceedings began shortly after three o'clock in the afternoon, and a distinguished platform included:

- Mr. D. D. Sheehan, M.P. (Mid-Cork)
- Mr. E. Crean, M.P.
- Mr. J. C. Forde, Hon. Sec., Cork Branch United Irish League
- Mr. M. D. Buckley, Crookstown
- Mr. D. McCarthy, R.D.C., Bandon
- Mr. John McCarthy, T.C., Bandon
- Mr. J. J. O'Shea, Ballincollig, Chairman Co. Organising Committee, Land and Labour Association
- Mr. M. Keane, Kilmurry
- Mr. P. O'Regan, Canovee

Among the districts present included:

- Kilmurry: D. Burke, R.D.C., T. Murphy, J. Hurley, D. Sullivan, J. Sullivan, D. Murphy, E. Sullivan, J. Desmond, J. Cronin, M. Finnigan, D. Fitzgerald, D. O'Keeffe, D. O'Leary, J. J. Lyons, T. O'Reilly, J. Downing.
- Carrigaline (South Cork): Michael Power, Wm. Leahy, Timothy McDonnell.
- Innishannon & Knockavilla: J. O'Mahony, R.D.C., D. Coveney, J. Cronin, D. Healy (Sec).
- Killumney: J. Walsh, J. Curton, J. Leary, P. Neill, J. Cronin.
- Aherla: J. Hickey (Hon. Sec.), T. Hickey, J. Foley, J. Lynch, J. Coughlan, D. Donoghue, M. Drummey, B. Foley, D. Crowley, C. Daly, and others.
- Rylane: O. Allen, D. Sullivan, H. Cronin, J. Long, W. Barrett, J. Radley.
- Clondrohid: C. O'Shea, D. Leary, J. Connell, J. Quill, M. Cotter.
- Rahalisk: J. Murphy, B. Neill, E. Sweeney, Denis Finnegan.

• Aghabullogue: P. Looney, Frank F. Carey.

Mr. D. D. Sheehan, M.P., was greeted with cheers. He declared his pledges to farmers had been fulfilled through the Land Act, which had enabled nearly one-fourth of Ireland to be purchased within two years. He promised to remain equally steadfast in support of the labourers, reminding the farmers that they owed solidarity to the men who had stood by them. He also denounced attempts to undermine him in his own constituency, affirming: "As long as I stand by the labourers, they will stand by me." Mr. Wm. Murphy, R.D.C., Macroom, affirmed that Mr. William O'Brien, M.P., remained firmly rooted in the affections of the working men of Mid-Cork, and warned against the allegedly divisive tactics of Mr. O'Shea M.P. Mr. J. J. Calnan, Bandon, also addressed the meeting in support.

In January 1906, a Convention was held in Killarney for the purpose of selecting an ILLA supported candidate for East Kerry. It was lead by Canon Hayes of Killarney, and Rev. Fr. James Browne of Glenflesk. The proceedings, however, were marked by sharp disagreement and ultimately ended in adjournment. At an early stage, Mr. John Murphy raised objection to the constitution of the Convention. He argued that several branches of the Land and Labour Association, though entitled to representation, had not received admission cards, while parts of one parish had been given over-representation. He also objected to the presence of delegates from more than one branch in certain districts. Mr. Eugene O'Sullivan replied, and supported the admission of delegates from the Kilcummin, Muckross, and Gneeveguilla branches. However, Mr. Condon, M.P., explained that delegates could not be recognised unless they were formally elected by their respective branches. He further suggested to the

Chairman that the Convention was not properly constituted.

The Rev. Chairman had agreed and declared the proceedings invalid, adjourning the Convention. The decision to adjourn was met with loud protest from Mr. O'Sullivan and his supporters. Refusing to accept the ruling, they subsequently convened a separate meeting, at which Mr. F. O'Sullivan, M.C.C., presided. At this gathering, Mr. Eugene O'Sullivan was duly selected as candidate for East Kerry.

A well-attended meeting of the Land and Labour Association was held at Glenflesk, south-east Kerry, during March 1906, with Mr. Cornelius O'Donoghue in the chair. Mr. O'Donoghue opened the proceedings by giving an account of the great Labour Convention held at Mallow, North Cork, the previous day. He described the gathering as a "complete success" (hear, hear), but added candidly that he did not agree with all that had been said and done. He expressed particular regret that an important resolution proposed by Mr. James O'Shea, R.D.C., had been defeated. The resolution sought to give labourers the same opportunity to purchase their plots under the Land Purchase Act of 1903 as the farmers now enjoyed. "There is nothing so important to the labourer," he said, "as to be owner of his own plot." He urged that it was not yet too late to have the measure included in the forthcoming Labourers' Bill, and called on branches across the country to press the matter vigorously. He was confident of a "bright future before the labourers if they were only true to themselves," and appealed to every man, young and old, to join the Labour organisation in his district, so that labourers' claims could no longer be ignored.

At the turn of November 1906, a meeting of a local ILLA branch was held at Clondrohid, at which the

following attended—Messrs. C. O'Shea, chairman; P. Riordan, treas.; J. Riordan, hon. sec.; W. Quinlan, J. Carroll, W. Creedon, C. Cronin, G. Buckley, M. Murray, M. Looney, C. O'Leary, D. Lehane, etc., etc. The following resolution was proposed by Mr. John Riordan and seconded by Mr. Maurice Finnegan:

> *"Resolved - That we, the members of the Clondrohid Land and Labour Association, pledge our unanimous approval of the fencing on the various estates in the parish—the reinstatement of the evicted tenants, and the factors engineering their reinstatement, be inserted in our District Council minutes, and forwarded to the Estates Commissioners."*

Some discussion arose about the fencing of the tenants' half-acre plots, and the labourers promised to attend next Board day at Macroom in force. After transacting some unimportant business, the meeting adjourned.

In March 1907, the '*Southern Star*' remarked that that the police had once again attempted, unsuccessfully, to capture the so-called "outlaws of Ballingeary," men who had resisted the execution of what was widely described as a heartless eviction in the district. The press remarked upon the persistence of such raids and questioned when the farce would end, and when the people might finally be permitted to live in peace. The warrants in the case remained unexecuted. Amid this atmosphere, a lady correspondent from Ballingeary sent to the paper a short poem reflecting local feeling. Though not offered as high poetry, the verses were presented as a revealing glimpse of the thoughts occupying the minds of the people of the district. The subject was none other than the same police pursuit, and the piece adopted a tone of irony:

"Through bog and mire and deep morass,
The Ballingeary place pass,
Searching glens and mountain caves,
For the Ballingeary braves,
Out all night in frost and snow,
Checking the wintry blasts that blow,
Shivering, shaking, hungry, cold,
Thoughts of country sold for gold;
Nothing to reward their pains,
Nothing to fill the prison chains,
Furthere than ever from his promotion;
Still no strides for his devotion;
Pity, my readers, if you can,
The Ballingeary policeman."

In April 1907, the Macroom District Committee of the Irish Land and Labour Association had discussed a case which, if substantiated, can scarcely be termed anything other than land grabbing. The case concerned a labourer named Scannell, who had been in occupation of a small piece of woodland on the estate of Sir George Colthurst for over thirty years. Though not a formal tenant, Scannell enjoyed certain grazing rights, which enabled him to keep a cow for the support of himself and his family. When the estate came under the purchase arrangements, the agent approached Scannell and invited him to buy the plot. He was said to have consented on certain conditions. However, according to evidence before the committee, an adjoining tenant named Lynch intervened. Having learned of the arrangement, he allegedly approached the landlord and was rewarded with control of the land previously enjoyed by Scannell. It was further alleged that Lynch had earlier withheld his own purchase agreement until concessions were granted to the labourers—but, having secured these, he then accepted terms and obtained the plot long associated with Scannell. If these allegations proved correct, the act was being denounced as a gross

usurpation of a poor man's right. Members of the Land and Labour Association warned that the supposed grabber "may count now on having a disagreeable time before him." The case was expected to rouse widespread indignation throughout the district, should the facts as presented to the committee be substantiated.

In January 1910, Macroom was the scene of extraordinary political disturbance, when two rival gatherings were announced for the same hour and the same place - the Town Hall. On one side, the United Irish League summoned a convention to select a candidate for the Parliamentary division. On the other, public posters called upon labourers to assemble for a "Sham Convention" protest, denouncing "dictation and Devlinism" and urging Mid-Cork workers to "strike a ringing blow for freedom of election." Fearing a repeat of previous disturbances, when League delegates were evicted from the hall by supporters of Mr. D. D. Sheehan, M.P., the League party took precautions. Branches were instructed to send strong contingents, and the front door of the Town Hall was barricaded from the inside with furniture piled to the ceiling. The authorities also anticipated trouble. A large police force - some 120 strong - under County Inspector Fawcett and District Inspector Glasgow was drafted in to preserve order. By eleven o'clock, the town was thronged with people arriving on foot, on horseback, and in carts. The Square presented a scene of unusual animation as crowds gathered and police took up positions. From the Victoria Hotel, headquarters of the League, the delegates, accompanied by nearly twenty priests, Mr. W. Fallon, Mr. T. Condon, M.P., and about forty others armed with stout sticks - marched to the side door of the hall, under heavy police guard. Here they were met by Sheehan and his followers, numbering several hundred, many under Land and Labour Association banners and led by the Kilnamartra

Band playing God Save Ireland. Mr. Sheehan demanded entry to the Convention. His request being refused, his supporters attempted to force a way through. For several minutes priests, police, and labourers wrestled on the steps, sticks were raised, and rough handling was general. Thanks to the intervention of the police, serious injury was prevented. The arrival of the Aghabullogue branch of the Land and Labour Association and the Canovee Band brought further tumult. Rotten eggs were hurled at League men and clergymen, while windows of the Town Hall were smashed by missiles thrown from the crowd. Inside, the Convention proceeded, but outside the Square resembled a battlefield. There were repeated melees, free fights broke out, and the police were kept continually moving to separate factions. Thwarted in his attempt to gain admittance, Mr. Sheehan addressed his supporters, declaring that they had made their protest against "infamous methods introduced into Mid-Cork." He then led a march through the town, halting again at the Town Hall, where egg-throwing resumed amidst jeers and cheering.

When the Convention ended, the delegates were escorted under heavy police guard from the Town Hall to the Victoria Hotel, passing between two lines of constables and under a storm of hisses, groans, and jeers. Later in the afternoon, further clashes occurred near the Town Hall. Sticks and fists were freely used, and only the timely intervention of police prevented what threatened to become a serious riot. Several individuals were badly assaulted before order was restored. By evening the disturbances gradually subsided. A few windows were smashed, and tempers still ran high, but the police, whose forbearance throughout was noted, eventually persuaded the crowds to disperse quietly.

SOCHAÍ

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IRISH LAND AND LABOUR ASSOCIATION

MEETING AT MACROOM.

SPEECHES BY LORD EMLY, DR TANNER, M.P., AND OTHERS.

(Cork Examiner 28/8/1900)

ILLA president, D.D. Sheehan MP, was an active figure in his native region.
(Public domain photo - All-for-Ireland League, 1910)

An ILLA mass meeting at the Market Square, Macroom Urban, in 1894.
(Public domain photo)

SOCHAÍ

BANTRY BOARD OF GUARDIANS

The '*Skibbereen Eagle*' reported in February 1900 that a usual fortnightly meeting of the Bantry Board of Guardians was held with Mr. Wm. Cotter, Co. C., presiding. The other members present were: Messrs. James Gilhooly, M.P.; B. O'Connor, J. McCarthy, D. O'Driscoll, C. Hurley, D. Sullivan, M. Kelly, D. O'Leary, M. Harrington, Denis Sullivan, and J. Crowley. Mr. B. O'Connor moved that the Board deeply regretted the affliction caused to the family of Mr. P. Tobin, a respected member of this Board, on the death of his daughter, and tendered their sincere sympathy to him and his family in their sad bereavement. The Chairman said this was the first they had heard of this sad occurrence. Mr. Gilhooly said if they had known it sooner, they could have adjourned the Board. Mr. O'Connor said: "You can adjourn now if you wish, and I will add that to the resolution." Mr. O'Connor then added the words: "And that we now adjourn the Board." This resolution was seconded by Mr. O'Leary and unanimously agreed to. The Clerk said there was a notice of motion given by Mr. Gilhooly to move on that day fortnight that steps be taken to elect a Chairman of the Board in place of the late Mr. Dillon. The Board then adjourned to that day fortnight.

At another interesting meeting of the Bantry Board of Guardians, held during January 1903 at the Boardroom of the local Union Workhouse, Mr. Wm. Cotter, Chairman, presided. The other members present were Messrs. Jerh McCarthy, D. O'Leary, J. Connolly, T. Murphy, D. Creedon, J. Sullivan, D. Dillon, J. Gilhooly, M.P., B. O'Leary, J.P., and Michael Scully. Arising out of the fixing of the outdoor relief lists, Mr. Murphy asked the Relieving Officer whether he intended to visit the different dispensaries within his district on

appointed days for the purpose of dispensing relief. The Relieving Officer replied that the relief was conveyed to the recipients. Mr. Murphy pressed him to “name a day,” but Mr. McCarthy responded that he could not specify a day, as he might not be able to attend on that particular day. The Chairman reminded him that “there is a resolution of the Board which must be complied with.”Mr. McCarthy explained that the weather might prevent him from going on the day he might appoint, adding that he would go “every day I can.” Mr. O'Leary remarked that if the weather prevented him from going, it would also prevent the recipients from coming, and that he should arrange to go on the following day. Mr. Murphy asked, “Are you prepared to go or not?” to which Mr. McCarthy replied firmly, “You have got my answer, and it is the last answer you'll get.” The Chairman concluded the discussion by stating, “You are the servant of the Board, and you must make up your mind to go to the dispensary on a certain day.” No further action was taken. The Clerk then submitted the rate estimate for the ensuing year, which amounted to £3,383, compared with £3,283 for the corresponding period of last year. The amount of the demand on the County Council this year will be £3,048, as compared with £2,997 for the same period last year. The estimated balance on hand on the 25th of March will be £100, while the amount in favour of the Guardians on the 25th of March last year was £250. The Chairman asked under what heads the expenditure had increased. The Clerk replied that the increase occurred under the heads of establishment, indoor, and outdoor relief. The Clerk’s estimate was then adopted.

At a meeting of the Bantry Board of Guardians held in late January 1909, Mr. William Cotter presided. The Local Government Board had written forwarding queries for answers regarding the appointment of a Wardsmaid in the workhouse, to fill the vacancy left by

Miss Mollie Keane, who had resigned. Returns from "P" were received, showing 32 defaulters under the Vaccination Acts in the Bantry district. The Relieving Officer was directed to notify the defaulters. The Clerk then brought up a most important matter. He had received a letter from Dr. W.J. Shorten, Glengarriffe, stating that when he attempted to open an iron box where he kept his registration books, the key broke, and he could not open it. The Assistant Registrar, Mr. O'Shea, said he had given the key to Dr. Browne, Local Government Board Inspector, and it snapped in his presence. Dr. Shorten was now unable to access the books to register cases. He had informed the Registrar General of the situation and was sending the key to the Board of Guardians, in case it was possible to obtain a replacement. His vaccination book was also in the box, and he wished to have his books squared up before leaving, but regretted he could not do so at present. The Clerk remarked that he had something very serious to say, but would not do so in the presence of the press. Mr. Gilhooly joked, “Dangerous men!” (laughter). Mr. O'Leary asked, “Is it from Dr. Browne you got that letter?” The Clerk replied, “No, from Dr. Shorten.” Mr. O'Leary continued, “He said Dr. Browne was there?” The Clerk explained that Dr. Browne had attempted to open the box, and the key snapped. Mr. O'Leary asked why no report had been made to the Guardians to obtain a replacement key. The Clerk said Dr. Browne would report everything to the Local Government Board in due course. Mr. O'Leary said, “That's very strange.” The Clerk responded, “No, there is nothing strange about it. You will receive the report in the ordinary course of business.” The letter was marked “Read.”

The Clerk reminded the Board that it was the day for the election of a Medical Officer for Glengarriffe, as well as for the appointment of a Wardsmaid in place of

Miss Keane. The advertisements for the posts appeared in the “Eagle” of the 16th, and for the Medical Officer also in the “Constitution” and “Examiner,” ensuring they were fully advertised. Notices for the Wards-maid position were posted in the town. The Board decided to take up the election of the doctor first. There were two applicants: Dr. M.J. McCarthy, Tullamore, and Dr. W.H. O'Sullivan, son of Mr. W.H. O'Sullivan, J.P., Bantry. The Clerk noted that Dr. O'Sullivan had submitted his diploma and a certificate of his capabilities as a vaccinator, as required by the Local Government Board. Dr. McCarthy appeared personally. The Clerk asked if he had a certificate of proficiency as a vaccinator. Dr. McCarthy replied that he had been a qualified vaccinator for the last seven years. Mr. O'Leary commented, “I thought all these documents should be handed in at a certain time?” The Clerk replied, “They ought, sir.” Dr. McCarthy explained that only diplomas were requested, which he had forwarded. The Clerk confirmed, “You're quite right. It was not necessary then.” Dr. McCarthy added that only two men in Ireland could grant vaccination certificates. The Clerk stated that all qualifications were satisfactory. The Chairman then proposed Dr. McCarthy, noting his seven or eight years of experience in a dispensary district and full qualifications. Mr. Harrington remarked that whoever was elected should ensure they would assume duty immediately, and Mr. Murnane agreed. Mr. O'Shea seconded the resolution to appoint Dr. McCarthy. Mr. D. O'Leary proposed Dr. O'Sullivan, noting that he was born and raised locally, and Mr. O'Mahony, J.P., seconded. Mr. Harrington added, “They are both Irish at all events, the 'Macs' and the 'O's.'” The Chairman noted that Dr. McCarthy had knowledge of and supported the Irish language.

The Clerk confirmed the result as 15 for Dr. McCarthy and 14 for Dr. O'Sullivan. Mr. O'Leary expressed

doubt, suggesting the result was reversed, and requested a second poll. The other members affirmed that the Clerk's statement was correct. The Chairman declared Dr. McCarthy elected. Dr. McCarthy briefly returned thanks. Mr. O. O'Donovan, on behalf of Dr. O'Sullivan, thanked those who voted for him, noting that they had not expected to win due to the influence exercised. The Chairman replied, "Speak up; your remarks might require a reply."

Another interesting meeting of the Bantry Board of Guardians took place at the turn of January 1910. Mr William Cotter presided, and Mr. James Gilhooly JP MP, was also present. The Local Government Board wrote requesting particulars of the persons who would receive outdoor relief after Saturday, 1st January, 1910. Mr. Gilhooly remarked that this was presumably for the purpose of amending the Act. "It certainly wanted to be amended," he said, "because it was cruel on persons who received outdoor relief." The matter was referred to the Relieving Officers. The Matron applied for, and was granted, one week's leave of absence, with the Master agreeing to have her duties performed in the meantime. The Chairman then referred to a recent decision of the Land Sub-Commissioners, noting that they were giving reductions of from 6s to 7s 6d in the £. As a result, people who had not purchased land and were going into Court were, in fact, better off than those who had purchased, as they were receiving larger reductions. Mr. O'Driscoll commented, "I saw them and they are very good judgments." Mr. Murnane remarked, "They were, but the cases are not altogether very reliable."

The Chairman explained that, as a rule, the reductions landlords gave ranged from 15s 0d to 5s 6d in the £, which would equate to twenty-two years' purchase. In the Court, some tenants were receiving 7s 6d in the £.

There was an estate at Ardnagree where the tenants requested 8s, and the landlord offered 7s. Mr. Gilhooly was mediating between them. “Yes,” said Mr. Gilhooly, “and some of the tenants were not satisfied, and rightfully so, because they got 7s in Court.”

The Chairman added that Mr. Kelly, Commissioner, was offering about 7s in the £ as a reduction. The tenants in question had received between 6s and 7s 6d and would have taken 8s if purchasing, but the landlord would not agree. Thus, they were better off under the current arrangements than if they had purchased. Mr. Murnane commented, “I would not mind if you came on now. I think you have not published this.”

The Chairman replied that he had not, but his reduction had been fixed at ten per cent, having been settled before the Tories went out of office. Mr. Gilhooly remarked that the average reduction given under the Tories had been 22 per cent. Mr. Murnane noted, “The commissioners are not to be relied on; they have good and bad men.” Mr. Gilhooly added, “It is better for a man to have purchased out.” The Chairman responded, “It is not a Purchase Act they want now. It is an Act to reduce the period for going to Court, which was fifteen years. A great many people could not go into Court for ten years.”

The Chairman concluded that these reductions in Court were an eye-opener to the landlords, who would have to make a fairer deal than expected. Mr. Druwbill added that on the Leigh White estate at Glengarriffe, tenants had accepted what was offered to them. The Chairman noted that it was in the landlords’ own interests to sell as well as the tenants’ to buy. The tenants at Breenymore were still renting under valuation, but if offered reasonable terms, they would likely be satisfied. After this discussion, the matter was dropped. There

was no subsequent meeting of the Rural District Council due to the absence of a quorum.

As reported by the '*Freemans Journal*' in May 1910, the Bantry Board of Guardians passed a resolution expressing condolences to King George V and Queen Alexandra on the passing of King Edward VII.

In June 1910, Mr. Cotter (County Councillor) was elected chairperson of the Bantry Board of Guardians, Mr. Harrington was elected vice-chairman, and Mr. Hurley was elected deputy vice-chairman.

SOCHAÍ

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James Gilhooly MP was a leading figure of local civic institutions in the Bantry urban and rural areas.
(Public domain photo - All-for-Ireland League, 1910)

New Street, Bantry Urban, at the turn of the century. (Source: National Library of Ireland)

THE EDWARDIAN BANTRY URBAN & RURAL DISTRICT COUNCILS

One of the earliest documented activities of the Urban District Council (UDC) is when it came to nominating a delegate onto Cork County Council at Bantry UDC. Mr. William Cotter, P.L.G., was nominated on eight papers. One of these came from Mr. Gilhooly, M.P., and another from Rev. James McDonnell, P.P., Adrigole. Mr. P. O'Leary, solicitor, was nominated on ten papers, the first two being submitted by Henry Breen and James Fitzgerald of Bantry town. The nominators listed were those appearing on the initial two papers handed to the Returning Officer.

It was also documented that the District Council nominations from Bantry for the County of Cork included Messrs. James Gilhooly MP, D. Donovan and B. O'Connor on behalf of Bantry Urban, as well as J. Cullinane JP, Denis Cronin and Timothy Sullivan on behalf of Bantry Rural.

One of the earliest recorded full meetings of the Bantry Urban District Council (UDC) also occurred in early March 1899, with Mr. J. Gilhooly, M.P., in the chair. Those present included Messrs. D. Donoghue, M. O'Driscoll, M. Minehan, H. O'Connor, D. O'Donovan, and J. Cullinane, J.P. Mr. O'Driscoll moved a resolution, of which he had given notice, to rescind the earlier decision naming the Square Egerton Square. Mr. O'Donovan seconded the motion. Before the chairman could put the resolution, Mr. O'Connor objected that neither the proposer nor seconder had offered any explanation for their motion. He suggested they were merely following Mr. Gilhooly's directions. The chairman intervened, asking Mr. O'Connor not to be offensive and insisting that no member was acting

under his orders. A heated exchange followed, with Mr. O'Connor maintaining he was speaking to the motion while the chairman accused him of insulting members of the Board. The chairman warned that if Mr. O'Connor continued in this manner, he would be ruled out of order. Mr. O'Connor persisted, claiming the resolution must have originated with the chairman. Mr. Cullinane agreed, while Mr. O'Donovan denied any such influence, insisting he had long opposed the name Egerton Square.

The discussion grew increasingly pointed. Mr. O'Connor argued that the original naming of the Square had been a recognition of generosity by the Bantry estate owners, who had contributed £500 towards its enlargement, with further sums secured for public use. He warned that rescinding the name might jeopardise Bantry's chances of gaining control of market tolls. He suggested the move was politically motivated, tied to Wolfe Tone commemorations used for electioneering. The chairman dismissed Mr. O'Connor's remarks as broad-minded speculation, but challenged him to put himself forward in the coming elections if he wished to test his standing with the electorate. The motion was eventually carried, with Messrs. Cullinane and O'Connor voting against. Regarding future business, Mr. Donovan gave notice of his intention to move that the Square be renamed Wolfe Tone Square. The chairman announced he would bring forward a resolution on the levying and collection of tolls and customs at fairs and markets in Bantry. Additionally, Mr. Donovan also gave notice of a motion concerning the need for improved housing for the working classes in the town. The meeting then adjourned.

In July 1899, the '*Cork Examiner*' outlined that The first quarterly meeting of the Bantry Rural District

Council (RDC) was held at 11.30 during the morning in the Bantry town courthouse. The meeting focused on the consideration of new works and related matters. Mr. James Gilhooly, J.P., M.P., presided. Also in attendance were Messrs. W. Cotter (County Council), T. Dillon, S. H. Payne, J.P., D. Donovan, D. Cronin, J. McCarthy, D. Sullivan, P. Callenan, P. Tobin, T. Sullivan, C. Crowley, M. Harrington, J. Manning, J. Hurley, J. McCarthy, J. Mahony, Captain D. Sullivan, B. O'Connor, J. Crowley, C. Hurley, P. O'Brien, D. McCarthy, C. Cronin, D. O'Leary, J. Connelly, and P. Downey. The Chairman stated that the only applications before them came from the County Surveyor and were all for road repairs. He noted that some of the roads would fall into disrepair by September and observed that certain contracts covered many miles. In his opinion, shortening contracts would improve the quality of the work and allow local labourers to take them on, since labourers could not secure guarantees for large sums. He also favoured employing direct labour as a test case, to see whether work could be done more economically than under the present system. He cautioned, however, against undertaking this on too large a scale. Mr. Harry, contractor, supported the idea of a test case, suggesting that one road could be worked for three months on such a basis. Mr. Longfield, County Surveyor, explained that it would be impossible at that stage to divide up any of the larger roads, though a number of smaller ones could be allocated to labourers. It was agreed to apply a test case by employing direct labour. Mr. K. W. Longfield, County Surveyor for the West Riding, then submitted his report. He noted that an unusually large number of roads would fall out of contract on 15 July and 30 September, and that proposals for their maintenance would be required. While no major works were currently in progress, he remarked that the district's roads were generally in better condition than those in other parts of the West Riding. He advised offering

slightly higher prices than in the past, and also exercising the option not to accept the lowest tender if the amount quoted was inadequate. By following this approach, he said, substantial improvement in the roads could be achieved. He further recommended rebuilding and enlarging gullies in Bantry town, which he hoped would prevent the serious flooding that had occurred the previous year. The following applications from the County Surveyor were considered:

- Swanton's Bridge (Keenemegagh Pass): Repairs to abutments and water-paving, estimated cost £5 (half county charge, half rural district) – approved.
- Old Bridge, Dunmanway: Repairs to abutments and retaining walls, estimated cost £10 (rural district charge) – rejected.
- Bridge from Dunmanway to Kealkil Chapel: Repairs to abutments, parapet walls, and water-paving, estimated cost £7 (rural district charge) – approved.
- Bridge under Bantry street (above Capthorne's mill): Repairs to bridge and retaining walls, estimated cost £3 (half county, half rural district) – approved.
- Gullet near Canon Shinkwin's gate (Bantry): Rebuilding, deepening, and covering with rails and concrete, estimated cost £43 (half county, half rural district) – approved.
- Gullet near Bantry schoolhouse: Re-building, deepening, and covering with rails and concrete, estimated cost £54 (rural district charge) – approved.
- Four-ope gullet on Bantry–Dunmanway road (near Drimmbroe): Remodelling, clearing bed of stream, etc., estimated cost £30 (rural district charge) – approved at £5 for repairs only.

The remainder of the business was formal in nature.

In January 1902, it was reported by the '*Southern Star*' that, at a special meeting of the Bantry Rural District

Council, members had unanimously passed a resolution urging the Government to construct a connection between the Cork, Bandon and South Coast Railway and the Great Southern and Western Railway. The Council stated that such a link would be of immense benefit to the local fishing industry and would also serve the naval and military regiments stationed at Bantry Bay. They requested that the construction of the connecting line or bridge at Cork City be made an essential condition in negotiations concerning the Cork and Fermoy Railway project. Similarly, on the motion of Mr. O'Connor, the Bantry Town Commissioners unanimously passed a resolution similar to that adopted by the Rural District Council. Both bodies directed their clerks to forward copies of the resolutions to Mr. James Gilhooly, M.P., the Chief Secretary, and Mr. A. Chamberlain, M.P.

In early 1906, Bantry was struck by an outbreak of typhus fever, prompting urgent discussions at the Bantry Rural District Council. The meeting, held on Saturday 3rd February and chaired by Mr. D. O'Donovan, J.P., was dominated by reports from medical officers on the seriousness of the epidemic. Dr. Browne, an Inspector for the Local Government Board, visited the town on 30th January and inspected the temporary fever hospital. This makeshift facility, consisting of two large tents erected on the grounds of the existing Fever Hospital, had already received its first patients. Browne noted that while the tents were floored and heated with stoves, they offered little protection in poor weather. With no suitable permanent hospital closer than Skibbereen, 22 miles away, he approved their use. At the time of his inspection, four patients, such as a man, two women, and a young girl, were under care. While they appeared well attended to, Browne expressed deep concern that the epidemic showed no signs of abating. He attributed the outbreak

to the insanitary condition of various houses in New Street, William Street, and Barrack Lane, where overcrowding, poor ventilation, and the widespread practice of taking in lodgers created dangerous conditions. He urged the Guardians to take immediate and vigorous action. Dr. O'Donovan, the local Medical Officer of Health, agreed with Browne's findings. He emphasised that the fever had spread mainly in the poorer quarters of Bantry, and insisted that houses be inspected, disinfected, and in some cases closed altogether. Strict enforcement of sanitary by-laws, he argued, was essential if the epidemic was to be brought under control.

The discussion among councillors had reflected the seriousness of the situation. Chairman O'Donovan described the outbreak as a grave matter requiring urgent attention. Mr. Crowley blamed the overcrowded and unsanitary state of Bantry's poorer lanes, while Mr. Murphy pressed for immediate appeals to the Local Government Board for outside assistance. The meeting concluded with agreement that the authorities must act decisively. The idea of establishing a permanent fever hospital for Bantry was raised—a recognition that the makeshift tents were an inadequate solution to a recurring public health crisis. The typhus outbreak of 1906 highlighted the fragile sanitary conditions of Bantry at the turn of the century. It also underscored the growing role of local district councils in managing public health, as well as the challenges rural towns and their surroundings faced in securing proper medical facilities.

In March 1907, under the chairmanship of Mr James Gilhooly, M.P., the Bantry Rural District Council met in special session to consider representations made under the Labourers' Acts. The occasion drew an unusually large attendance, with the Board-room

crowded not only by councillors but also by farmers and labourers anxious about the outcome. In total, 138 representations for labourers' cottages were received. Before business began, the Clerk read a letter from the Local Government Board clarifying that the Council was not bound to fix cottages on the exact holdings named in the applications; instead, a Sites Committee would be charged with their selection. Chairman Gilhooly urged efficiency. He suggested that, unless such overwhelming objections were raised, all representations should be passed and left for final decision at the official inquiry. This, he argued, would spare the Council wasted time in endless wrangling. More importantly, he proposed that labourers themselves be given representation on the Sites Committees, so they would have a direct voice in choosing where the cottages were to be built. This suggestion met some resistance. Councillor D. O'Leary raised a legal point, insisting that Bantry's urban labourers ought not to receive cottages funded by the rural district. Heated exchanges followed. Gilhooly ruled firmly that Bantry, not being an incorporated urban district, entitled its labourers to apply, and that all representations must be received. The Clerk supported this interpretation, dismissing objections that the matter should be referred to Dublin. O'Leary bristled "I'll see it out, I won't be bullied", but the Chairman refused to yield, and the meeting moved on. Formal objections were lodged by Mrs O'Donovan against cottages on her lands at Newtown, with solicitor P. O'Leary appearing on her behalf. Gilhooly, however, brusquely refused to hear arguments from solicitors, declaring that the Council's duty lay with the labourers. His ruling won loud applause from those present, particularly the labourers, who greeted his words with enthusiasm. As one voice from the floor put it, "Some of these big fellows want to depopulate the country entirely!"

Applications were passed with only a handful of rejections. Notably, the case of Timothy Connor was dismissed on the grounds that he was an "emergency man" and resided outside the district. Summing up, the Chairman reminded members that opposition had been exaggerated. Under previous Acts, the repayment per cottage had been £4 10s annually; now, it was reduced to £3 5s. With careful administration, he argued, the scheme would impose little extra burden on the rates. More importantly, it would improve the lives of labourers, reduce dependence on outdoor relief, and help to anchor families in their home places. "It will elevate the labourers in the social scale," he declared, "and give them some inducement to remain at home."

Before closing, the Rural District Council appointed Sites Committees composed of councillors from each division alongside labourer representatives, being a practical application of Gilhooly's principle. Finally, in discussing the appointment of an Engineer for the scheme, Mr T. Murphy cautioned that the last engineer's errors had proved costly, and insisted that any future appointee should be held accountable for rectifying mistakes. The Chairman agreed. The meeting thus ended with progress made, but also with tensions laid bare: between urban and rural claims, between farmers' rights and labourers' needs, and between the strictures of law and the Chairman's determination to drive through reform.

Interestingly, in 1910, the '*Southern Star*' asserted, without hesitation, that the Bantry Rural District Council had set a lead which other local bodies ought to have followed if they were serious about fostering native industry. In carrying out the Labourers' Cottage Scheme, the Council's engineer, Mr Mulcahy, had wisely and patriotically specified Irish materials wherever possible. The paper drew particular attention

to the use of local slate. Instead of sending Irish ratepayers' money across the Channel to support the Welsh quarries, Bantry town had turned to the rural parish of Drimoleague. The result, it declared, was plain to see: men employed, machinery kept in motion, and a once-quiet quarry working almost night and day. Had this practice been universally adopted, the '*Southern Star*' argued, Ireland would have seen not only constant employment for quarrymen but a revival of industry in its own districts, all brought about without one penny leaving the country.

Nor, the paper noted, did the policy end with slate. In Bantry the carpenters had been kept at their benches, for the specification called for locally made woodwork, such as window frames, sashes, and all, rather than imports from England. By such measures, quarrymen, carpenters, and masons alike had been provided with steady employment, and the benefits of the scheme had radiated far beyond the housing of the labourer. The '*Southern Star*' contended that this was the example which ought to have been taken up by engineers across Ireland. Too often, it maintained, they seized upon flimsy excuses to evade their duty to Irish labour and Irish manufacture. Bantry, it insisted, proved that such evasions were unnecessary. The paper concluded that Irish money ought to be spent on Irish work, and it commended the Bantry Council for showing that this had been done, and done well.

SOCHAÍ

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Main Street, Bantry Urban
(Source: National Library of Ireland)

SOCHAÍ

THE TOWN TENANTS OF EDWARDIAN BANTRY

In February 1905, the '*Irish Independent*' reported that Mr. Daniel O'Donovan, Chairman of the Bantry Town Commissioners, presiding at a meeting in the town at which a branch of the Town Tenants' League was established, said that there was no town in Ireland with a greater need for the work of that organisation, as rents in Bantry were much higher than in any other town in Munster. Mr. B. O'Connor, J.P., himself a town landlord, strongly emphasised the necessity of organisation and unity among town tenants. He expressed the hope that the artisans' houses which the Town Commissioners were about to build would have the effect of reducing rents.

The '*Skibbereen Eagle*' also documented the meeting. The Chairman, in opening the proceedings, said the meeting had been called for the purpose of establishing a branch of the Town Tenants' Association in the town. Throughout Munster, branches of the Association had already been formed in many towns, but he ventured to say that there was no town in Ireland more in need of a branch than Bantry. Owing to the depression in trade and other adverse causes, the labouring class found it impossible to pay the exorbitant rents being charged for their miserable dwellings. The Association had been started to help these and all other harshly treated tenants in towns. He emphasised that it would be of no use to establish a branch in Bantry unless they followed it up by holding meetings regularly, attending in large numbers, and exposing any cases of harsh treatment practised against members. The town should take a lesson from the country tenants, who, through combination and perseverance, had secured their rights from the landlords. He was confident that the farmers

would now support the town tenants in their struggle, just as the latter had assisted the former in their fight against landlordism. He expressed the hope that Bantry would have a strong and active branch of the Association and that they would carry the movement to success.

In the '*Southern Star*,' it was reported that Mr. James Gilhooly, M.P., in his speech at the meeting, declared that he knew of no town more in need of the Association to protect its residents from the rapacity of landlords, as rents there were charged higher in proportion than in any other town in County Cork. The view was expressed in the '*Southern Star*,' that there was not a town in Ireland that would not benefit from actively joining the Association. He also expressed the hope that in the very near future, the establishment of the Association would be extended to other towns in the county which, for one reason or another, had not yet lent their support and influence to what had all the elements of a powerful and successful organisation.

A meeting of the Bantry branch of the Town Tenants' Association was held in the Town Hall during early March 1905. Mr. P. O'Sullivan, the branch President, occupied the chair. The Secretary, Mr. P. Murphy, read communications from the Central Executive of the Town Tenants' Association. It was decided to respond promptly to the appeal contained in the following resolution:

> *"That, as it is of great importance to give this policy immediate effect, we hereby establish a Tenants' Organising and Defence Fund, and call upon the branches and towns generally to make it a success that will convince landlords they are facing an earnest movement to free town tenants from the unjust grip of oppressive*

ownership. We also appeal to agricultural tenants, who have previously supported towns in redressing grievances, to aid their town brethren in their present struggle against similar injustice."

The Chairman, in a vigorous address, stated that the movement had made great progress in the town since the branch was established a few weeks ago. A large number of householders had enrolled as members, but he would not be satisfied until every householder in the town who was not a landlord was enrolled (hear, hear). He stressed the necessity of supporting the movement and submitting names to the secretaries immediately. He also criticised the slow progress of the District Council regarding the waterworks. The poor people of the town were suffering from a lack of proper water supply, yet no work had begun. He urged the Town Commissioners to carry out their plans for the construction of artisan dwellings and to call on the District Council to build more cottages near the town to provide proper housing for labourers. He cited Wyndham's reply to Sir Thomas Esmonde and Lord Dunraven as a reason to organise and press the Government regarding these specific grievances. He emphasised that if all town tenants in Ireland joined the Association, they would form a force that no Government could resist. Mr. D. O'Donovan, then addressed the meeting, explaining why the District Council and Town Commissioners had not yet proceeded with the waterworks and artisan dwellings schemes. He assured the meeting that no further delay would occur once a few remaining difficulties were resolved (hear, hear). Mr. J. McCarthy, proposed that Messrs. D. O'Donoghue, D. Sullivan, and Cornelius O'Donovan be added to the committee to ensure proper representation for workmen and tradesmen (hear, hear).

Mr. D. O'Leary, B.L., seconded the proposal, noting that it was essential for artisans and workmen to have adequate representation on the committee. He emphasised that the working class stood to benefit most from the Town Tenants' movement. By publicly advocating for their grievances, they would arouse public opinion, prompting local bodies to implement their proposed schemes and provide work for the town's poor. He described it as disgraceful that labourers, despite paying substantial rents, were forced to endure inadequate housing. He urged working-class members and tradesmen to join the Association, be loyal, and support one another. He also encouraged them to purchase Irish-made products to help retain young people in the country and reduce emigration. A large number of attendees then joined the Association, and the proceedings concluded.

Another interesting meeting of the Committee of the branch was held in the Town Hall, Bantry, during December 1906, with Mr. B. O'Connor, J.P., presiding. The following resolutions were passed:

1. *"That we condemn the action of the House of Lords in emasculating the very moderate Town Tenants' Bill, which had been passed through the House of Commons with overwhelming majorities; the Lords have rendered the Bill practically worthless and unfit to be placed on the Statute Book."*
2. *"That we call on the town tenants of Ireland, and particularly on those of Munster, who have hitherto been too apathetic, to advance their claims through vigorous agitation, and to show the so-called House of Lords that the clearly expressed will of the people must prevail."*
3. *"It is to be regretted that the branches of the Town Tenants' Association are not supporting the Central Executive as they should. We regard it as the*

bounden duty of the branches not merely to pay their affiliation fees annually, but also to contribute generously to the General Organising Fund, so as to strengthen the Executive and enable it to advance the Association's work and compel Parliament to remove the grievances under which town tenants labour."

The Chairman warned that the town tenants would have to take matters into their own hands if they did not obtain a full measure of relief. He noted that their movement had made great progress over the past few years and that their claims were almost fully recognised by Parliament. He added that it was a significant victory to secure the passage of a Bill, however inadequate, through the Houses of Parliament at Westminster.

In the New Year of 1907, the '*Freemans Journal*' outlined that a meeting of the Bantry branch's 'Briscoe Presentation' sub-committee was held, with Mr. D. O'Leary, B.L., then President of the local Bantry Branch, presiding. Letters enclosing subscriptions were received from the districts of Cashel, Birr, Castlebar, and Delgany. Several other communications were also received, promising active support from towns and their tenants across the country. The Chairman stated that, as far as Bantry was concerned, he could promise that when he returned home, the matter would be taken up with energy, and that the benefits secured for town tenants through Mr. Briscoe's efforts would be duly recognised.

It was decided to hold a further meeting in support of the presentation at the Mansion House on Tuesday, the 8th of January, at 5 o'clock in the evening. It was also agreed to open an account in the Hibernian Bank, O'Connell Street, where subscriptions could be lodged

to the credit of the Briscoe Presentation Fund. All communications were to be addressed to the Honorary Secretaries, Mansion House, Dublin City.

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Main St., Bantry Urban
(Source: National Library of Ireland)

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SPORTS ACROSS THE SHEHY MOUNTAINS

According to the '*Kerry Sentinel,*' during September 1900, the long-awaited Kilgarvan sports trials were held in glorious weather, attracting a large and fashionable crowd from across South Kerry. The picturesque field on the banks of the Roughty provided a perfect setting for a day of cycling and athletics, where young and old competed with vigour, and spectators enjoyed a spectacle of skill, speed, and stamina. The success of the event was thanks to the tireless efforts of the local sports committee: Messrs. Hickey, Quill, Hegarty, Cronin, Lyne, O'Leary, Aldworth, and Randles. Their dedication to ensuring a smooth and enjoyable meeting was quite evident in every detail, from the careful preparation of the track to the arrangement of prizes. The programme was packed with cycling and athletic events, and the races were fought with skill and determination. From the youngest competitors to the seasoned athletes, each event showcased the talent and spirit of Kilgarvan and surrounding districts. Exciting finishes and close contests kept the spectators on the edge of their seats, demonstrating the effectiveness of the committee's organisation, as well as the careful handicapping by Mr. O'Sullivan.

In November 1901, the anniversary of the execution of the Manchester Martyrs - Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien - was marked in Macroom with an unusually large and solemn display. The initiative came chiefly from the committee of the Macroom GAA club, supported by the Macroom Brass Band, who provided stirring and appropriate music throughout the evening. In recent years, it was noted by the '*Southern Star*' that enthusiasm for the annual commemoration had waned

in the town, but on this occasion that indifference was decisively broken. Men, women, and children all took part in a funeral-style torchlight procession that evoked the pomp and grandeur of a state occasion. Tar barrels blazed, torches lit the streets, and the sound of "God Save Ireland" brought cheers and clenched fists as the crowd remembered the sacrifice of the three men hanged in Manchester more than thirty years earlier. Though their lives had been taken, speakers insisted, their spirit had survived in the hearts of Irish men and women. The demonstration was impressive in size and atmosphere. At eight o'clock, members of the Football Club gathered outside their rooms, joined by the Brass Band, and together they marched through the principal streets. The torchlight and music created a striking spectacle, with the band alternating between mournful and rousing airs. The procession ended in the Square, which was filled with a vast crowd listening to speeches delivered from the windows of the Victoria Hotel. Among those present were members of the Football Club committee, the Macroom Brass Band, the Land and Labour Association, the Young Men's Society, and the United Irish League, reflecting the broad base of nationalist and cultural organisations in the town. Mr. T. J. Twomey, U.D.C., took the chair and opened the proceedings, expressing pride that the people of Macroom had joined with the rest of the country in honouring the martyrs. He described them as men who gave their lives for Ireland and urged his listeners to remain true to their example. The principal speaker was Mr. D. D. Sheehan, M.P. for Mid-Cork, who was greeted with prolonged cheering. Sheehan praised the martyrs' sacrifice as a noble offering on the altar of Irish liberty, and declared that commemorations such as this kept their memory alive and demonstrated the people's continuing devotion to nationalist principles. Linking the past to the present, he compared their example to the resistance of the Boers in South

Africa, drawing loud cheers for General De Wet, and to the election victory of Colonel Arthur Lynch in Galway, a man who had fought against Britain in the Boer War. In his words, the Manchester Martyrs had not been great men by worldly measure, but their humble lives had been illuminated by a passionate love of Ireland, and it was that spirit which Macroom's people had gathered to celebrate and perpetuate. The evening concluded peacefully, with the constabulary present but not interfering. Those who attended left with a renewed sense of solidarity and patriotic fervour, reminded that the sacrifice of 1867 was not forgotten and that the cause for which Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien died remained unfinished business for Ireland.

A large and representative meeting was held in Kilgarvan in Autumn 1904, as per the '*Kerry People*,' for the purpose of making arrangements for the annual sports and horse races. The following committee was unanimously selected: Messrs T. A. B. Taylor, R. H. Orpen, Jeremiah P. Quill, Jeremiah Hegarty, Timothy J. Lyne, R.D.C.; John O'Brien, Fussa; John Duggan, Richard Aldworth, Joseph Aldworth, John Healy, R.D.C.; Pat Dineen, R.D.C.; Pat D. Healy, Con Godfrey, R.D.C.; Daniel D. Healy, Denis Sullivan, Timothy Shine, Thomas Randles, Michael Sullivan (Gortloughane); T. Carey, Con D. Callaghan, Jeremiah Callaghan, John D. Quill, Maurice Healy, Patrick P. Quill. On the proposition of Mr. Jerh. Hegarty, seconded by Mr. Jeremiah P. Quill, Mr. T. A. B. Taylor was appointed Chairman. It was further proposed by Mr. Taylor and seconded by Mr. John O'Brien that Mr. Jeremiah Hegarty act as Honorary Secretary, while Mr. Jeremiah P. Quill was unanimously appointed Treasurer. The sports was to take place at Fussa on the 7th October, while the races would follow the next day at Clonton, on the picturesque course near the River Roughty, kindly made available by its owner, Mr.

Taylor. Lovers of both sport and scenery were encouraged not to miss these fixtures, which promised enjoyment and satisfaction from every point of view.

However, the same newspaper would sadly report a couple of weeks later that A special meeting of the Kilgarvan Sports Committee was held on Thursday for the purpose of proposing a vote of sympathy to Mrs. Jeremiah P. Quill on the death of her husband, the late Mr. J. P. Quill, Treasurer of the Committee. The Chairman, in opening the proceedings, said they had met under very sad circumstances. The Committee had sustained a severe loss in the passing of their Treasurer. He stated that he had known the deceased for a considerable time and could say, without hesitation, that Mr. Quill was a credit to any body of Irishmen. In expressing those sentiments, he was confident he spoke for the entire Committee in conveying their heartfelt sympathy to Mrs. Quill and the bereaved family. Mr. T. J. Lyne supported the Chairman's remarks. He said the deceased had been a close personal friend of his for nearly twenty years, and had always proved himself a thorough Irishman. Mr. Quill was ever ready to give liberal support to any cause for the welfare of his country, and his loss as a patriot would be deeply felt throughout the parish. Mr. Jeremiah Hegarty, Honorary Secretary, also spoke in terms of deep regret. He observed that any words he might utter would fall short in expressing the sorrow felt at the untimely death of their much-respected friend and Treasurer. Mr. Quill, he said, was always open-handed to the poor and needy, and his absence would be keenly felt for many a day to come.

In August 1904, the '*Southern Star*' reported that, once again the Macroom Sports Committee demonstrated the value of thorough organisation in their annual cycling and athletic reunion. The 1904 fixture, held on a

Sunday in the Pigeon Fields, under the auspices of the local Catholic Young Men's Society, fully upheld in every respect the prestige and repute of the Macroom meeting. It was noted that in previous years, the event had been associated with ever-increasing success, and it must have been gratifying for the promoters to find their efforts to maintain progress once more rewarded. In terms of organisation, the respectability of entries, the keenness of competition, and the admirable arrangement of the grounds, the Macroom Sports compared favourably with, if not surpassed, similar provincial fixtures. Indeed, as an athletic gathering of steadily increasing reputation, it was regarded in sporting circles as excelling many of the more pretentious meetings held throughout the country.

It was claimed that this was only natural in a district so rich in athletic talent and so renowned for producing men of fame in the Gaelic arena. Macroom and its surrounding locality had long given the Gaelic Athletic Association some of its sturdiest exponents, and the 1904 event again provided proof of the continuance and growth of the old Gaelic spirit among the rising generation. West Muskerry, in particular, was looked upon as a nursery of athletes, and on this occasion many novices, especially in the long-distance races, showed ability to hold their own at the majority of Southern fixtures. That such athletic prowess lacked fuller opportunities for development was a matter of regret.

It was also highlighted that the Committee, however, spared no effort in encouraging competition and in attracting the most representative athletes in both foot and wheel events. The substantial and costly nature of the prizes on offer was a notable feature of the meeting and deserved commendation. Care had also been taken in the compiling of the programme to cater for public

taste, with several novel and interesting items introduced. Combined with the reputation of the meeting itself, this had served to draw a strong attendance. Despite unpropitious weather, with drizzle and threatening skies during the fore-noon, and notwithstanding the many counter-attractions elsewhere in the South, the gathering at Macroom was as large as ever. The competitions were keenly contested, the standards high, and the fields both numerous and representative. In every sense, the Macroom Sports of 1910 proved worthy of the district that had produced such great local men as Looney and McCarthy in earlier years.

An '*Evening Echo*' sports feature from 1908 recounted a story about Clondrohid GAA, which occurred during the previous decade. Mr. C. O'Leary, who captained the Clondrohid team in the celebrated 1891 championship, later supplied some striking particulars about that year's competition. On 28 February 1892, Clondrohid faced the Young Irelands of Dublin at Clonturk Park. Ill fortune struck before the game even began: the referee originally selected was taken ill, and his place was filled by a Dublin gentleman, a member of the Central Council and representative for Queen's County. The contest itself was hard fought. When the final whistle blew, the scoring stood at Clondrohid: 2 goals and 11 points; Young Irelands: 2 goals. At that time, however, no number of points could equal a goal. Victory appeared to belong to Clondrohid. To the astonishment of players, spectators, and even the Young Irelands players themselves, one of Clondrohid's goals was mysteriously disallowed. The decision was appealed to the Central Council, which unanimously overturned the referee's ruling and ordered a replay at Thurles. Clondrohid, disgusted at the treatment they had received, particularly the demand that they travel at their own expense, having already borne the cost of the

Dublin trip, refused to play again. The Young Irelands likewise failed to appear. Thus, the All-Ireland Championship of 1891 was left undecided. As O'Leary observed with bitter irony, the outcome suited the GAA's Central Council well enough, for it saved them the expense of striking and presenting twenty-one gold medals.

In 1910, it was reported that, after a lapse of five years, the Kilgarvan Cycling and Athletic Sports were successfully revived, once again proving one of the most popular fixtures in South-East Kerry. Despite heavy morning rain, the skies cleared about ten o'clock, and the afternoon was fine and favourable for the large crowd that gathered. The meeting was held in a field about a mile from Kilgarvan village, on a specially prepared grass track. Owing to recent rains, the going was heavy for both cycling and athletics, but this did not diminish the spirited contests. The committee spared no pains or expense in securing attractive prizes, which drew a strong entry in both codes. By midday, streams of people had arrived by train, bicycle, jaunting car, and on foot, swelling the attendance into a great mass of spectators. The picturesque setting on the banks of the Roughty, beneath the surrounding hills and within sight of the historic battlefield of Callan, lent a striking backdrop to the day's proceedings. The committee consisted of:

- President: Rev. J. O'Shea, P.P.
- Vice-President: L. T. Moore, J.P., M.D.
- Treasurer: M. McCarthy, N.T.
- Hon. Secretary: E. Hickey, N.T.
- Members: Messrs T. A. B. Taylor, J. O'Brien, T. J. Lyne, R.D.C.; M. Beckett; D. O'Leary, R.D.C.; E. O'Sullivan, R.D.C.; P. Dineen, R.D.C.; T. Herlihy, R.D.C.; C. Godfrey, R.D.C.; D. Cronin, N.T.; M. Randles, N.T.; J. Cronin, N.T.; John Quill; T.

O'Reilly; R. Aldworth; Jerh. Healy; P. J. Quill; Ed. O'Sullivan; M. Gleeson; J. O'Brien; J. Quill; N. Hearty; Tom Reidy; J. Quill (Cork).

The handicapper and starter as Mr. William Collins, of Tralee, North Kerry. From the first starter's pistol, the contests were fiercely fought. The youngsters opened the day in style. Jeremiah Herlihy took the honours in the 220 yards for boys under twelve, while Patrick Buckley—a sprinter to watch—won the 300 yards for lads under fifteen. In the 880 yards confined, P. Foley ran a commanding race to victory. The crowd roared for the 100 yards open handicap, where "Smyth" of Cork proved the fastest man on the field, with P. D. Lane of Castleisland a worthy second. Cycling was no less exciting. C. O'Shea of Doneraile swept to victory in the one-mile open, pursued by J. E. Deady of Banteer. Later, Buckley of Kilgarvan delighted the home crowd with an easy win in the confined three-mile event. The veterans also had their day. Teahan of Kilcummin, well-known in Kerry sport, soared highest in the high jump, and later M. J. Teahan added the long jump to his tally, with Kavanagh of Tralee second. The endurance men thrilled the spectators in the three-mile open cycle, won by Deady of Banteer, while "Smyth" of Cork showed his versatility by adding both the 220 yards and the 440 yards sprints to his earlier victory.

With sixteen sporting events contested, crowds in their hundreds, and a setting as fair as any in Kerry, the Kilgarvan Sports returned in grand style. The fine organisation of the committee and the spirited efforts of the athletes ensured that the day was more than a revival, it was a celebration of sport, community, and Kerry pride.

The market town of Macroom was also known to host athletic events in the region. In August 1902, the '*Cork*

Examiner' reported that the Macroom sports meeting, held under challenging circumstances, proved a remarkable success, illustrating the dedication and energy of the organisers. Despite difficulties in securing a suitable field that year, the committee persevered and laid out a venue that, though slightly smaller, offered excellent conditions for competitors and spectators alike. The event reportedly demonstrated perfect organisation from start to finish. The committee overcame the challenge of finding a suitable field and transformed the venue into a first-class sporting arena. Competitors and spectators alike were treated to thrilling contests in both foot and wheel events. The quality of the participants was high, with some of the most prominent athletes of the region present, and the prizes were both costly and well-deserved. From start to finish, the day reflected meticulous planning, fairness, and a strong sense of community pride. The turnout was exceptional, with special trains from the city filled to capacity and spectators crowding every available space. The large and enthusiastic attendance highlighted the enduring popularity of the Macroom sports and the confidence the public places in the organisers. The key figured involved were:

- President: Jeremiah O'Leary, M.C.C.
- Honorary Treasurer: Carroll O'Sullivan
- Honorary Secretary: K. O'Reilly, D.D. Lynch
- Honorary Committee: Timothy J. Twomey (Chairman, R.D.C), William D. Murphy (D.D.C), Michael Purcell, John J. Foley (solicitor), William M. Murphy, Richard Quill, Jamey Murphy, John Richardson, John J. Cronin, John Fitzgerald, John Murphy, Edward Murphy, Denis D. Buttimer
- Executive Committee: S. W. Galvin, Humphrey Lynch, Timothy J. Cronin, Denis Cronin, John O'Shea, D. D. O'Leary, Cornelius O'Leary, Daniel Healy, Richard Neville.

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The '*Southern Star*' reported that annual general meeting of the Macroom GAA, with a focus on Gaelic football, was held in the club rooms on a February night, during 1910, with President Mr. Denis Murphy in the chair. A large gathering of members and supporters attended, reflecting the renewed vigour and popularity of the Gaelic pastimes in the district. The chairman explained that the business of the meeting was twofold: the appointment of officers for the coming year, and the distribution of the county championship medals to the victorious team of 1909. He recalled that since their last annual meeting, the club had enjoyed unprecedented success. After years of effort, they had finally secured the coveted Cork County Championship. This was met with applause. Tracing the history of Gaelic games in Macroom, he noted that the G.A.A. had been established in the town nearly twenty-five years earlier. At first it had been a hurling club, but after injuries discouraged play, football was adopted. For many years the footballers had come close to championship honours without ever succeeding, until the triumph of the 1909 team, who defeated the Lees, Fermoy, Youghal, and Bantry to secure both the West Cork and Cork County titles. Representing Cork in the inter-county championship, Macroom had supplied ten men to the county side that overcame Kerry at Limerick, winning by four points. However, a technical objection involving a Lees player, Beckett, led to a replay in Cork, where Kerry prevailed narrowly. The chairman remarked that, in truth, Cork had finished ahead of Kerry on aggregate points and that impartial observers regarded the Macroom men as the true champions of Ireland. This was again met with applause. He also reviewed their successes beyond the county campaign, including victory in the Bandon Tournament, while noting the establishment of a new hurling club in Macroom which showed considerable promise. He

praised the discipline and conduct of the players, declaring them models of sobriety and honour both on and off the field - unlike some teams elsewhere which carried the stigma of rowdyism. He urged all members to continue building up the club, for though 1909 had been a splendid year, he believed even brighter days lay ahead.

An audited statement of accounts showed a balance of £11 19s 2d. The Secretary, Mr. John Kelleher, then presented his detailed report. He reminded members that the present club had been reorganised in 1904 at a time when Gaelic spirit in Muskerry was at a low ebb. By perseverance and enthusiasm, the young Gaels of Macroom had revived the movement, raised its moral tone, and restored the games to popular favour. Gradually the team had risen to prominence until it could be claimed that Macroom had no equal in Ireland. He reviewed the campaign in detail: victory over Lees at Coachford, triumph over Fermoy in Cork, a hard-fought replay win against Youghal, and finally the defeat of Bantry to secure both County and West Cork honours. He also touched on the controversy with the County Board and the loss of the All-Ireland chance to Kerry through technicality. The second-grade team had shown promise, defeating Lees and Nils before losing to Fermoy in the county final. The newly-formed hurling team had made progress and continued in league competition. Mr. Kelleher noted the heavy expense of travel for players from outlying districts, which placed a strain on resources beyond the allowances of the County Board. Nonetheless, he highlighted further success, including victory in the Bandon Tournament by the senior team. In conclusion, he thanked the committee and players for their loyalty and support. The report was warmly received, and the evening closed with the distribution of championship medals, symbols of a year that placed Macroom firmly

at the forefront of Gaelic football in Cork and, in the eyes of many, in Ireland itself.

In July 1910, it was documented that the annual reunion of the Macroom Sports Committee was held that month, under somewhat uncertain weather conditions, with intermittent showers in County Cork suggesting the day might be damp. However, upon arrival in Macroom, it became clear that the morning had remained largely fine and dry, with only a light shower just before the events began, hardly enough to inconvenience the large crowd of spectators. The sports field was thickly lined with enthusiastic spectators, reflecting the community's enduring support for the committee and its work. The crowd's presence was a testament to the meticulous efforts of the organisers, who had left no detail unattended in preparing for a rather seamless day of various types of sports and entertainment.

The day's success owed much to the judicious planning and management. For example, Mr J. J. Buckley oversaw the cycling events with remarkable efficiency, ensuring the program ran smoothly from start to finish. His attention to detail and fairness in handicapping was widely praised, and the competitors and public alike appreciated his efforts. Mr J. J. Barry, the local railway manager, ensured the smooth running of special train services, handling the large influx of spectators with skill and courtesy.

The reunion also featured a varied and entertaining programme of music and performance, showcasing both classical and popular works. Among them included:

- March: "Giojoso"
- Overture: "Pique Dame"

- Supper Waltz: "Rein-Du-Danube"
- Vocal Selections: "Reminiscences of Ireland" (Godfrey), "Clorinda"
- Solo Instrumental: "Ring", "Lilliputian"
- Opera: "La Traviata" (Verdi)
- Spanish Dance: "La Paloma"
- Waltz: "Weine Lafi" (Ziehrer)
- Finale: "Let Erin Remember".

In May 1912, as reported by the '*Killarney Echo and South Kerry Chronicle*,' delegates from regional clubs on the Kerry side of the county border were present at a meeting of the Kerry GAA's County Board. Messrs F. Healy, T. Maybury and J. Coleman appeared on behalf of the Kenmare GAA club's hurling section, with the County Secretary reporting that affiliation fees had been received from such. The meeting also considered applications for sports field committees to obtain permits to hold annual meetings, and they were unanimously agreed to. Board member Mr. Cronin remarked that a rule had been passed at their last Convention dealing with sports meetings where there was no affiliated club. The Chairman remarked that he was aware of such, but that there was an affiliated club in all centres who had made applications at that time. When another delegate, Mr. Kennedy, queried if this included some small locations such as Kilgarvan, the chairman clarified that such an application from the parish had not appeared before them yet.

At the turn of June 1912, as reported by the '*Kerry Sentinel*,' a well-attended and representative meeting was held in Shelbourne Street, Kenmare, for the purpose of establishing a Gaelic football club in the town. The chair was taken by Mr. Thos. J. McCarthy, and among those present were Messrs M. D. O'Sullivan (Commercial Hotel), D. J. Cremin, C. Arthur, Warren, J. Swaine, F. Warren, J. Swaine, J.

Vickery, P. McCarthy, J. Shea, J. Nolan, G. McCarthy, D. Hallissey, P. Cremin, D. F. O'Sullivan, J. Hurley, T. Cronin, T. White, T. Madden, B. Long, J. Lee, T. Kennelly, J. O'Sullivan, P. Cooper, D. Tangney, M. Cooper, J.C. O'Sullivan, F. Hartnett, J. O'Sullivan, J. Healy, J. Clifford, D. O'Donoghue, W. Gaine, R. Cousins, W. Jennings, D. Barry (Munster and Leinster Bank, Ltd.), W. Kelliher (do.), J. Kelly (G.S. & W. Railway), W. Hayes (do.), J. Healy (do.), D. Courtney, T. Creedon, G. Clifford, and M. J. O'Callaghan.

In opening proceedings, the chairman remarked upon the honour conferred upon him in being asked to preside over such a large and representative gathering. He recalled that the Gaelic Athletic Association had been founded in 1884 for the preservation of Irish national pastimes, and that it remained strictly non-political and non-sectarian. Football, he emphasised, was recognised in the constitution of the Association as one of the national games, placed second only to hurling. Quoting the late Archbishop Croke's strong support for the revival of football and other national pastimes, he argued that the establishment of a football club in Kenmare was both timely and necessary. The large attendance, representing all creeds, classes, and professions of the town, was in itself testimony to the demand. He dismissed the notion of conflict between hurlers and footballers, stressing that both games were equally promoted by the G.A.A. and that no member could be penalised for participating in both. The chairman concluded by formally proposing the foundation of a football club in Kenmare. Mr. M. D. O'Sullivan seconded the motion, which was carried amidst applause. The election of officers followed:

- President: Mr. T. J. McCarthy (proposed by Mr. Hallissey, seconded by Mr. Hurley, carried unanimously)

- Vice-President: Mr. J. Hurley (proposed by Mr. J. Clifford, seconded by Mr. McCarthy, carried unanimously)
- Treasurer: Mr. M. D. O'Sullivan (proposed by Mr. Cremin, seconded by Mr. Hallissey, carried unanimously)
- Hon. Secretary: Mr. D. J. Cremin (proposed by Mr. W. Warren, seconded by Mr. M. D. O'Sullivan, carried unanimously).

It was agreed that remaining officers and the committee would be elected by ballot at the next meeting. Arrangements were also made to rent a playing field, known as the Back Demesne, from Mr. M. D. O'Sullivan. Mr. O'Sullivan further announced that he would present a football to the club the following Sunday, a gesture warmly acknowledged by those present.

Subscriptions were then solicited for the club's funds. Several members contributed on the night, and others promised to do so before the next meeting. Before the meeting closed, the president spoke movingly of the recent drowning at Inch of Master Timothy O'Connor, a keen footballer. On his motion, seconded by Mr. M. D. O'Sullivan, a resolution of sympathy with the bereaved parents and family was passed unanimously. Thus was the Kenmare Gaelic Football Club formally established, with every prospect of success, and possessing the strong backing of the town and district.

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A group of lads playing a game of hurling in the region is depicted in the 2006 Cannes winning film, 'The Wind that Shakes the Barley.'

(Source: PATHÉ, 2006)

The settlement of Ballingeary.
(Source: National Library of Ireland)

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THE EARLY DAYS OF COLÁISTE NA MUMHAN

During the Edwardian era, Ballingeary stood out as a remarkable hub of cultural activity, with its remote and tranquil position tucked away in the folds of the Shehy Mountains. The village and its surrounding valleys became synonymous with the revival of Irish language and tradition, drawing visitors, scholars, and pilgrims alike. In this quiet landscape of lakes and peaks, where the native tongue still thrived, gatherings for festivals, feiseanna, and religious celebrations were imbued with a strong sense of national identity and cultural pride.

A reporter for the '*Cork Examiner*' in 1902 remarked that seldom had such a gathering been seen at Gougane Barra as that which assembled for the annual celebration of the Feast of St. Finbarr. He observed that the day was gloriously fine: the mountains, glens, and streams appeared at their loveliest, while the lake, the central feature of the panorama, looked enchantingly beautiful, reflecting the blue sky above and the dark, lofty mountains on either side. He noted that in the centre of the Holy Island, just south-east of the old circular ruin, stood a neat little church, itself a monument to the zeal and energy of the Rev. Father Hurley of Inchigeela. Yet, he considered, although the building accommodated a fair number, on this occasion it could not contain even a fraction of those who wished to assist at divine service. What most impressed the writer, and what he regarded as highly edifying, was the sight of the country people pouring into the secluded valley from their homes both near and distant, scattered across the mountain fastnesses. He described them as true Celtic types: the maidens, innocent and simple in appearance, tripping lightly over the mountain paths with a youthful vigour, often

accompanied by what were regarded as the stalwart sons of toil. He further observed the arrivals from distant towns in waggonettes and carts of every description, all filled to capacity. In his view, however, the most imposing spectacle was provided by the cycling fraternity, who had turned out in large numbers. Their bicycles, arranged before the local inn, on the green sward, and in every available space, made a striking impression. The writer noted that many had come from Macroom town, Inchigeela, Ballingeary, Ballyvourney, Killgarvan, Glengarriffe, and Kealkil.

In 1903, '*An Claidheamh Soluis*' gave the area a positive review. The writer described Gougane Barra as one of the loveliest and loneliest spots in West Cork. It was, they observed, one of the few places in Cork County that, without doing violence to language, could truly be called Irish- speaking. They recalled meeting near it two unfailing signs of a genuinely Irish district - so rare in Munster outside the Déise and the Kerry peninsula, with Irish-speaking children and Gaeidhil gan Bhéarla. According to the writer, An Gúgán was to be the seat of a summer school that year, and the site seemed almost ideal. The nearby villages of Inse Geimhleach and Béal an Átha Ghaorthaidh were described as perhaps the two most Irish-speaking villages in Cork. Accommodation, the writer noted, could be found in either of these villages or in the farmers' houses scattered across the countryside. There was also a hotel at Gougane itself, close to the lake shore. The article highlighted the Rev. Dr. Daly of Melbourne as the leading figure in establishing the summer school. He was expected to serve as the officiating priest in the small Hiberno-Romanesque chapel that Father Hurley had built on the site of St. Finbarr's cell. The writer concluded that the prospect of a summer holiday - with the fresh air in Gougane Barra's secluded quarters, the rushing song of the River

Allua ever-present, and Ceann Féidhidh within hailing distance—would surely appeal to many Gaels.

As documented by the '*Donegal News*,' in October 1904, the Feast of St. Finbar was celebrated at the famed Gougane Barra. The ceremony was attended by a large congregation. High Mass was celebrated by Rev. Father Walsh, C.C., of Cork City. Notably, the panegyric of the Saint was preached in Gaelic by Rev. Dr. Daly, the congregation being almost exclusively Irish-speaking.

A feature article by the '*Irish Independent*' in February 1905 highlighted the emergence of the Irish linguistic and cultural revival in Gougane Barra. It documented how, coming to Ireland, Rev. Dr. Richard O'Daly (from from Melbourne, Australia) perfected his knowledge of Irish and was fortunate to serve pilgrims who came to pray at the Oratory of Gougane Barra. In the summer of 1905, he gathered scholars from across Ireland and the surrounding district, marking the origin of the Irish College. Each day began with Mass, prayers in Irish, the Rosary, and the Angelus. After breakfast, classes were held in the large dining hall of Cronin's Hotel, followed by visits in groups to converse in Irish with local people. Evening meetings were held daily, and there was an Irish sermon on Sundays. All were pleased with their time there. In the autumn, at a Feis in Ballyvourney, Father Goulding of New Zealand offered an annual subscription toward a permanent Irish College at Gougane Barra. The various London and Dublin branches of the Gaelic League also contributed, and further subscriptions followed. As accommodation at Gougane Barra proved limited, the College was established at Ballingeary, which had a good hall for lectures, Irish-speaking schools, and suitable lodgings. The College opened for two sessions in July and August the following year. Mr. Dermot Foley had

charge, assisted by Rev. Dr. O'Daly and Mr. T. A. Scannell. Lessons included Irish phonetics, metrics of poetry, classes based on National School textbooks, conversational Irish, and Irish history. The College used Irish as much as possible. The district's antiquities and scenic, healthful location added to its appeal. Over twenty students attended each session, including priests, professors, National School teachers, and Gaelic League organisers. All were pleased and left with regret, many hoping to return. The College's influence quickly spread. The Irish language revival owed much to its efforts, and local children were engaged teaching the language across the country. Preparations were made to expand and improve, with additional lecturers and more accommodation planned. The Archbishop of Cashel, the Bishop of Cork, and other Munster bishops became patrons and supported the College with donations. There was hope for a great future, and it was hoped the College might eventually return to its ancient site near Gougane Barra.

A couple of years later, at the AGM of the Ballingeary branch of the Gaelic League, in 1907, Rev. Fr. T. Murphy, C.C., presided. The others present included Messrs. T. A. Scannell, NT; R. Walshe; J. Moynihan, DDC; J. Creed, RDC; E. O'Leary, RDC; R. Cronin, RDC; E. McSweeney; P.R. Cronin; C.J. Cronin; C. Manning; W. Cotter; J.C. Cotter; James Cotter; C. Healy; C.T. Lucey; T. O'Mahony; T.J. Creed; E. Creed; P. Roynane (hon. Sec); B. Shorten; T. Creed; T. Creedon; W. O'Sullivan, NT; James Cronin; W.J Cotter; R. Cotter; Miss Scannell; Mrs. J. Cotter; N. Sweeney; L. Scriven; N. Riordan, and others. Fr. Murphy praised the strong local support for the Gaelic League and the revival of the Irish language. He stressed that Ballingeary carried a special responsibility because Irish was still widely spoken there, and the district should lead the way in making Irish the

everyday language of the future. He argued that the Gaelic movement was not only cultural, but also moral and patriotic, giving people pride, principle, and integrity. He urged parents to speak Irish to their children, older people to avoid English in daily life, and households to act as schools for the language. He emphasised the importance of supporting local Gaelic classes, and he highlighted the success and growing popularity of the Irish Training College in Ballingeary (Coláiste na Mumhan) as proof of the district's importance in the revival. Finally, he encouraged the creation of a night school and reading-room, credited the temperance movement with strengthening the community, and praised the many young people who had become total abstainers, serving as role models for others.

Celebrating the Golden Jubilee of Coláiste na Mumhan in 1954, the '*Cork Examiner*' recalled how the first Irish Summer Training College was founded at Ballingeary in 1904. As previously shown, the turn of the century, the Gaelic League had successfully established branches across Ireland, but this created a challenge: the need for trained teachers who could instruct the growing number of people eager to learn the language. Although the issue was often raised at meetings of the League's executive, no concrete action had been taken. This changed in 1903 at a meeting of the Munster Feis Committee in Cork, when Shan Ó Cuív proposed setting up a college "to train Irish speakers as teachers of the language." The motion was strongly supported by An tAthair Peadar Ó Laoghaire, who chaired the meeting, and an organising committee was appointed. Its members included An tAthair Padraig Ó Muirthile, P.P., Iveleary; Padraig Ó Seaghdha of Glengarriff; An tAthair Augustin, O.F.M.Cap., Rochestown; An tAthair Donnchadha Ó Drisceoil, C.C., Inchigeela; An tAthair Seán Ó Conaill, C.C.,

Kealkil; Micheál Ó Murchadha, solicitor, Cork; and Tadhg Ó Scannaill, N.T., Ballingeary, with Liam de Róiste of Cork City as honorary secretary. Also instrumental was An tAthair Risteard Ó Dálaigh (Dr. Daly), a young Australian-born priest, scholar and linguist, who had mastered Irish through the Gaelic League in London and had already taught summer classes in Gougane Barra in 1902 and 1903. With his support, and thanks to the help of the local Parish Priest, An tAthair Padraig Ó Muirthile, who provided suitable accommodation in Ballingeary, the first training course opened on 4th July 1904. Diarmuid Ó Foghladha, known as "Feargus Finnbheal," became the first headmaster, assisted by Ó Dálaigh and Tadhg Ó Scannaill.

The college was an instant and resounding success, leaving a lasting impact not only on the Irish language revival but also on the broader course of modern Irish history. Many of the leading figures in the national movement turned to Ballingeary as a place where they could nurture the vision of "an Ireland Gaelic and Free." Among those associated with the college were Roger Casement, who made the first financial contribution; Tomás MacDonagh, one of the leaders executed in 1916; Tomás MacCurtain and Terence MacSwiney, the martyred Lord Mayors of Cork; George Clancy, the murdered Mayor of Limerick; and Cathal Brugha. Clergymen such as Fr. Seamus O'Callaghan and the Capuchins Dominic, Albert, and Augustine were also deeply involved. The college also drew international interest. Writers and scholars from countries including Germany, Holland, Norway, and Sweden came to study the Irish language and culture, further cementing Ballingeary's role as a centre of learning and national identity.

'*An Claidheamh Soluis*' remarked in 1908 that it was noted with satisfaction that the method course in Coláiste na Mumhan was to be placed under the care of Seaghan Ó Catháin for one of that year's sessions. Ó Catháin, it declared, had long been recognised as a pioneer of teaching reform within the Gaelic League and was regarded as standing at the very forefront of Irish teachers, distinguished alike for the soundness of his theoretical approach and for his marked success in practice. The College was accordingly congratulated on having once again secured his services for the training of students.

It was documented by '*An Claidheamh Soluis*' in December 1911 that it was remembered that during the previous summer the students of the "Munster Training College," Ballingeary, had invited former students to co-operate with them in presenting the Rev. Fr. R. O'Daly, D.D., Ph.D., with a token of their esteem. The gesture was intended to honour him both as an Irish phonetician of distinction and as the Principal of the College between 1905 and 1910. The response, it outlined, had been ready and generous. Contributions had arrived from almost every county and town in Ireland, many accompanied by letters expressing deep gratitude to Dr O'Daly and fervent hopes for his early return to the land of his affections. Others, too, who had never studied under the spell of Coláiste na Mumhan: teachers of Irish, university professors at home and abroad, men and women engaged in the wider work of language revival, business and professional people, priests and bishops—had joined his students in paying tribute to one who was regarded as among the most selfless, unassuming, and beloved of Irish language workers. The members of the Cork Branch of the Gaelic League had also forwarded a generous contribution to the fund, they having been the first in Ireland to recognise the vital importance of phonetics to

the proper study of the Irish language. The Committee of the presentation expressed its heartfelt thanks to the past students of the College, to Dr O'Daly's wider circle of friends, and to the loyal members of the Cork Branch for their support. In order to allow past students who had not yet contributed, and friends who might not have been aware of the project, a further opportunity, the subscription list was kept open until St Brigid's Day, 1912. The presentation, together with an album recording the names of all subscribers, was then prepared for dispatch so as to reach Dr O'Daly in Australia by St Patrick's Day. Contributions had been accepted by Rev. G. Nolan, M.A., B.D., Maynooth; Mr R. O'Keeffe, Ballyhooly, Co. Cork; and Miss MacMahon, M.A., St Mary's Training College, Belfast.

In 1912, the '*Freemans Journal*' reported that at the "Munster Training College," Ballingeary, the students were treated to a memorable occasion when Mr Piaras Béaslaí visited on a Monday evening to deliver a lecture on the history of Gaelic literature. Béaslaí spoke for an hour, tracing the fortunes of Ireland's literary tradition through its periods of flowering and decline. He explained how the great European Renaissance, which began in Italy during the twelfth century, scarcely touched Ireland, leaving only the faintest impression upon its literature.

He then turned to the seventeenth century, describing in sombre tones the destructive effects of Cromwell's rule. Scholars, poets, and men of learning were driven to destitution, and the poets of Ireland, compelled to live by their craft, sang of the simplest things in return for what little support they could find. The lecturer observed that inspiration itself seemed at times to have fled from Ireland, leaving only the beauty of the language and the haunting music of its verse as remnants of a greater age. Rev. Fr. Gerald Nolan, Head

Master of the College, presided over the gathering, and the hall was filled by the attendance of the entire body of students. The lecture was but the first in a series to be delivered on the subject during the week, promising the students further opportunities to engage with the rich and troubled history of their national literature.

SOCHAÍ

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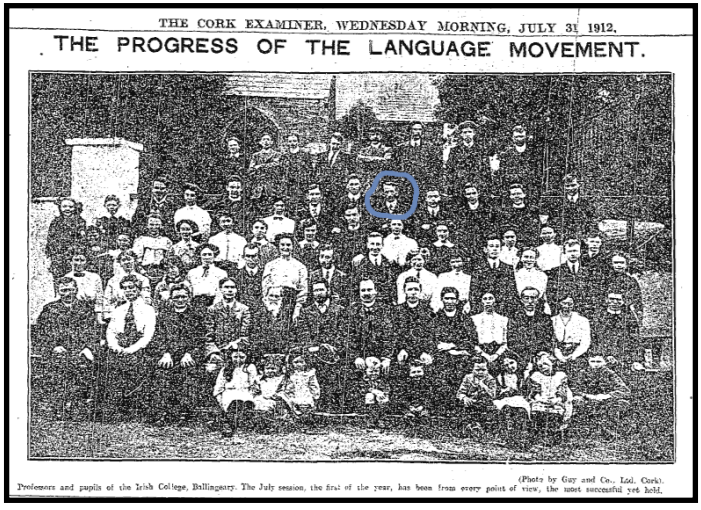


THE CORK EXAMINER, WEDNESDAY MORNING, JULY 31 1912.

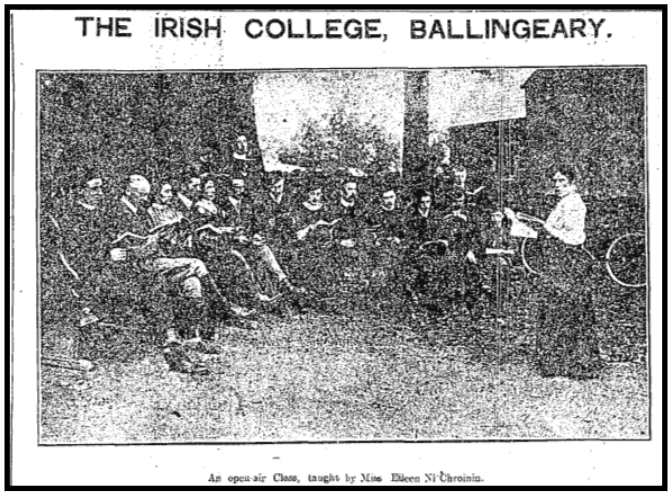
THE PROGRESS OF THE LANGUAGE MOVEMENT.

(Photo by Guy and Co., Ltd, Cork).

Professors and pupils of the Irish College, Ballingeary. The July session, the first of the year, has been from every point of view, the most successful yet held.

Terence MacSwiney (Traolach Mac Suibhne) in attendance (circled in photo) at the 1912 session of Coláiste na Mumhan, Ballingeary (Baile An Ghaorthaidh), Co. Cork.

(Cork Examiner 31/7/1912)



(Cork Examiner 9/10/1912)

AN HISTORIC GROUP—(Left to right): Sean O Cuimh, founder member, of Coláiste na Mumhan, Ballingeary; An t-Ath. Peadar O Laoghaire, who presided at the foundation meeting; Rev. Dr. Pleimeann, who was closely associated with the college from its inception; Dr. Osborne Bergin, who lectured frequently to the students, and the recently deceased Rev. Fr. Augustine, O.F.M.Cap., who drafted the first programme of work in the college's curriculum and who was also a founder member.

(Cork Examiner 16/4/1954)

SOCHAÍ
CONCLUSION

As the relatively tame Edwardian era gave way to the decade of conflict and instability, the Shehy Mountain region stood on the cusp of social and economic transformation. Yet it is worth pausing to consider what that earlier decade meant in its own right. It was a period when people in towns and parishes across the district grappled with practical concerns, such as housing, roads, rents, and rates - while also sustaining a vibrant cultural and social life. It was not simply a waiting-room before history began, but a stage where history was already being made.

Daily life in the Edwardian Shehys were neither easy nor stagnant. Local farmers contended with small holdings and variable markets, yet they kept their communities supplied with butter, cattle, and crops. Labourers faced uncertain prospects, but through grassroots organising and the work of the district councils, many secured new cottages with garden plots. Emigration drained households of young people, but it also created new connections, with letters and remittances tying emigrants in Boston, New York, or Greater London to families back home. The resilience of ordinary people was the quiet force that sustained the district.

The communal life of the Shehys was held together by ritual, sport, and sociability. The parish church marked time through feasts and fasts, while pattern days and pilgrimages linked faith to place. Music and dance provided moments of joy, with fiddles and flutes enlivening gatherings that stretched late into the night. Local ballads, sometimes celebratory, and sometimes satirical, often gave expression to community life. The Gaelic League's efforts to revive the Irish language

intertwined with the persistence of Irish-speaking households, ensuring that the old tongue was not forgotten. Sport played its part too. Hurling matches drew whole parishes onto the field, and victories were remembered long after the final whistle. These were not diversions from the "real" business of life; they were essential to the sense of belonging and shared identity.

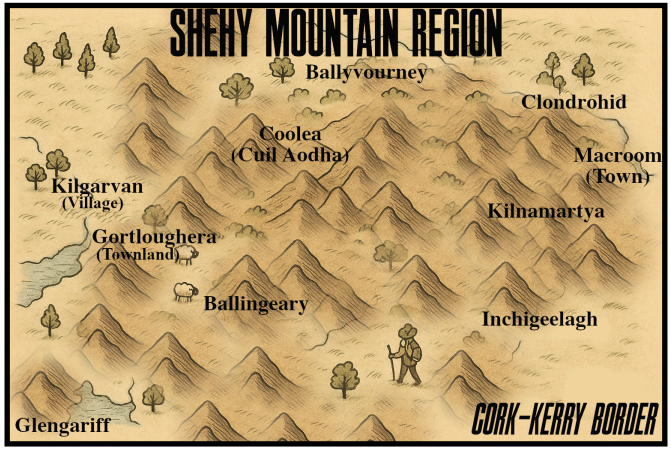
Politics in the Shehy region was not an abstract pursuit. It was encountered in the form of council debates about cottages, speeches at UIL and ILLA meetings, or the arrival of an MP to address a rally. It was lived through decisions about who would get a house, how much rates should be, or when the road to a village would finally be repaired. These local concerns were part of the national struggle for land reform and self-government. The Edwardian years saw communities across Ireland exercising new forms of representation and authority, laying the groundwork for the more radical, revolutionary flavours of politics that followed in the 1920s and 1930s.

The Shehy Mountains and their valleys were constant companions in this story. They gave shape to work, culture, commerce and imagination alike. Families cut turf from the bogs, grazed cattle on upland pastures, and walked long miles to fairs and markets. At the same time, the mountains framed folklore and poetry, offering both menace and inspiration. Rivers and lakes sustained life but also carried symbolic weight: Gougane Barra remained a site of pilgrimage, while the Lee connected the district to Cork City and the wider world. The environment was never merely background; it was part of the community's identity.

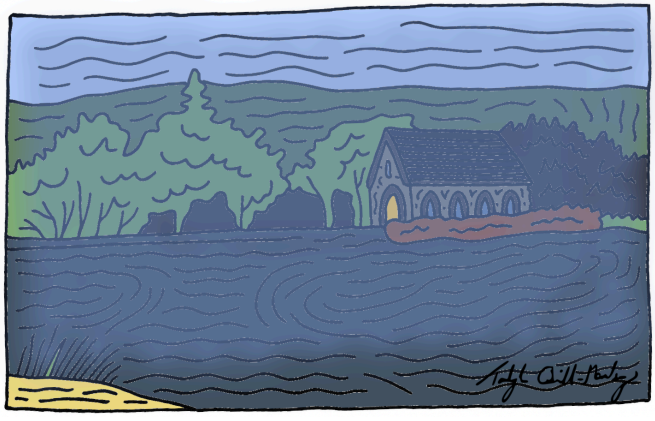
In retrospect, the Edwardian decade appears as the last chapter of a certain kind of rural Ireland. It was the end of an age when parish and town defined the horizon of

most lives, when the Irish language was still widely spoken in regular households, when priests wielded unquestioned influence, and when fair days were the high point of the social calendar. Yet it was also the beginning of something new: the spread of literacy, the stirrings of nationalist culture, the improvements in housing, and the emergence of councils as organs of self-government. To understand this period is to appreciate the blend of endurance and change that characterised the Shehy. It was a society rooted in land and tradition, yet alert to the possibilities of a different future.

When we think of the Shehy district in the Edwardian years, we are reminded that history is not only made in revolutions or crises. It is also made in the persistence of families, the building of cottages, the passing of songs from one generation to the next, the debates in the parish hall, and the games played on rough fields. The people of Macroom, Bantry, Kenmare, and all the parishes between were participants in their own history, shaping a community that endured and adapted. The Edwardian Shehy region offers us not nostalgia, but insight: a portrait of a society negotiating its place in a changing Ireland. It shows us how local life, with all its joys and struggles, had contributed to the broader currents that would soon sweep the country. Though the area, by English and American standards, possessed a sparse population, their impact was substantial. In that sense, the story of the Shehy Mountains is not marginal, but instead central to the understanding of society in an Ireland on the eve of unprecedented upheaval.



A stylised map of the region.



Cartoon artwork of Gougane Barra, created by the author.
(Source: Lee Valley Outlook 18/9/2025)

SOCHAÍ

DÁN - '*AG SÚIL SNA CNOC SEITHE*'

(As featured in '*Lee Valley Outlook*' 2/10/2025)

Ag siúl go ciúin i gCnoic na Seithe,
Scáil na gaoithe ag canadh liom sa tsí.
Tá an ceo ag luí ar loch is gleann,
Agallamh ciúin le hanam an bheann.

Cloisim fuaim na sruthán glé,
Mar sheanchas seanchaoch i bhfíor-ré.
Bímse i m'aonar, ach nílim tréigthe,
I measc na gcnoc, mo chroí faoiseamhaithe.

The Shehy Mountain region - 'Quill Country'